

1. [Chapter 1: West Africa](#)
2. [Chapter 2: The New World](#)
3. [Chapter 3: Colonization](#)
4. [Chapter 4: Slavery](#)
5. [Chapter 5: Identity during the American Revolution](#)
6. [Chapter 6: Economics of Cotton](#)
7. [Chapter 7: African Americans in the Antebellum United States](#)
8. [Chapter 8: The New Slave States](#)
9. [Chapter 9: Wealth and Culture in the South](#)
10. [Chapter 10: The Dred Scott Decision](#)
11. [Chapter 11: John Brown and the Election of 1860](#)
12. [Chapter 12: Early Mobilization and War](#)
13. [Chapter 13: The Origins of the Civil War](#)
14. [Chapter 14: 1863: The Changing Nature of the War](#)
15. [Chapter 15: Restoring the Union](#)
16. [Chapter 16: The Union Triumphant](#)
17. [Chapter 17: Congress and the Remaking of the South, 1865–1866](#)
18. [Chapter 18: Radical Reconstruction, 1867–1872](#)
19. [Chapter 19: The Collapse of Reconstruction](#)
20. [Chapter 20: The African American “Great Migration” and New European Immigration](#)
21. [Chapter 21: New Voices for Women and African Americans](#)
22. [Chapter 22: A New Home Front](#)
23. [Chapter 23: A New Generation](#)
24. [Chapter 24: The Depths of the Great Depression](#)
25. [Chapter 25: The Second New Deal](#)
26. [Chapter 26: The African American Struggle for Civil Rights](#)

## Chapter 1: West Africa

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Locate the major West African empires on a map
- Discuss the roles of Islam and Europe in the slave trade

It is difficult to generalize about West Africa, which was linked to the rise and diffusion of Islam. This geographical unit, central to the rise of the Atlantic World, stretches from modern-day Mauritania to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and encompasses lush rainforests along the equator, savannas on either side of the forest, and much drier land to the north. Until about 600 CE, most Africans were hunter-gatherers. Where water was too scarce for farming, herders maintained sheep, goats, cattle, or camels. In the more heavily wooded area near the equator, farmers raised yams, palm products, or plantains. The savanna areas yielded rice, millet, and sorghum. Sub-Saharan Africans had little experience in maritime matters. Most of the population lived away from the coast, which is connected to the interior by five main rivers—the Senegal, Gambia, Niger, Volta, and Congo.

Although there were large trading centers along these rivers, most West Africans lived in small villages and identified with their extended family or their clan. Wives, children, and dependents (including slaves) were a sign of wealth among men, and **polygyny**, the practice of having more than one wife at a time, was widespread. In time of need, relatives, however far away, were counted upon to assist in supplying food or security. Because of the clannish nature of African society, “we” was associated with the village and family members, while “they” included everyone else. Hundreds of separate dialects emerged; in modern Nigeria, nearly five hundred are still spoken.

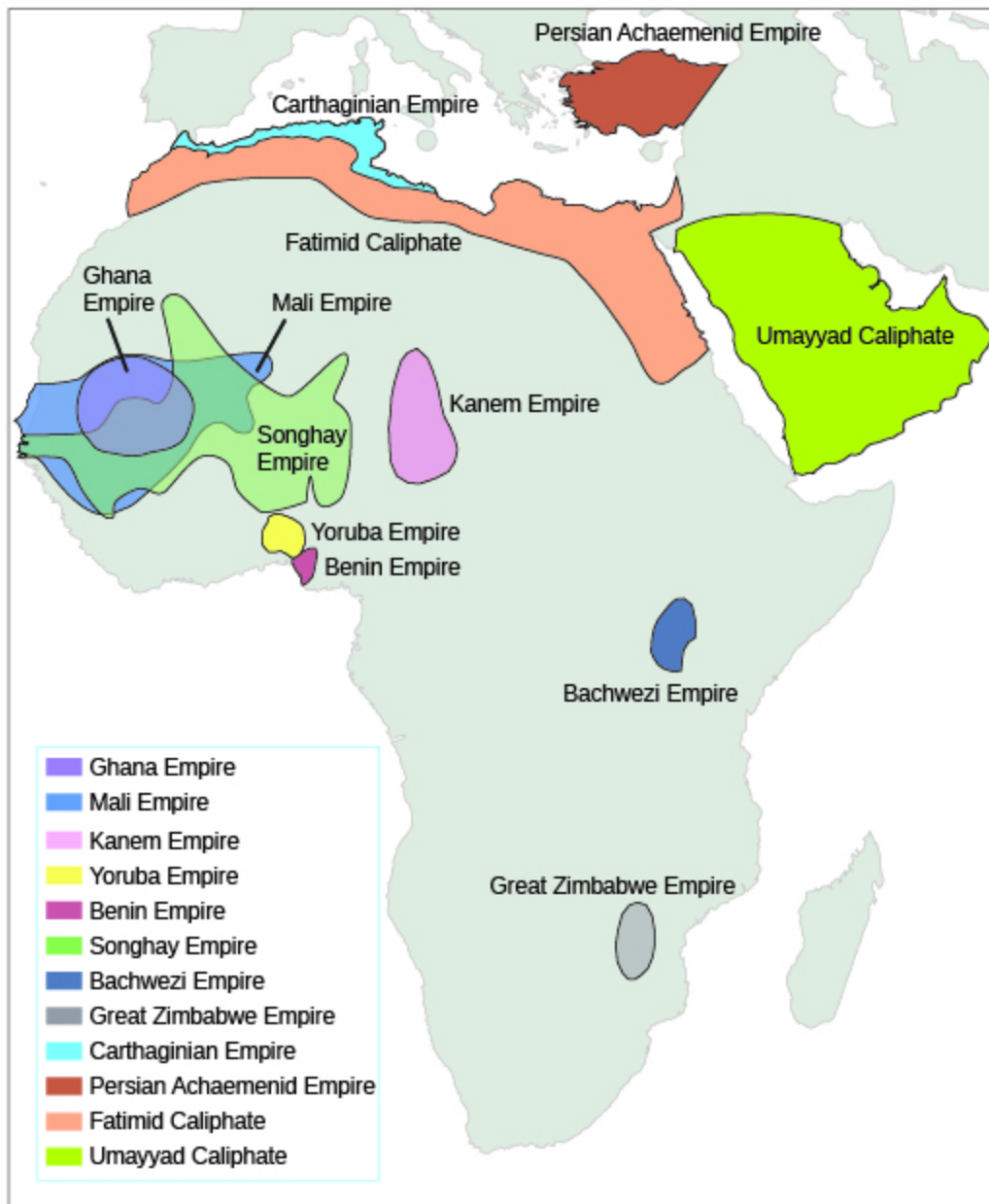
### **Note:**

Read [The Role of Islam in African Slavery](#) to learn more about the African slave trade.

## THE MAJOR AFRICAN EMPIRES

Following the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, Islam continued to spread quickly across North Africa, bringing not only a unifying faith but a political and legal structure as well. As lands fell under the control of Muslim armies, they instituted Islamic rule and legal structures as local chieftains converted, usually under penalty of death. Only those who had converted to Islam could rule or be engaged in trade. The first major empire to emerge in West Africa was the Ghana Empire ([\[link\]](#)). By 750, the Soninke farmers of the sub-Sahara had become wealthy by taxing the trade that passed through their area. For instance, the Niger River basin supplied gold to the Berber and Arab traders from west of the Nile Valley, who brought cloth, weapons, and manufactured goods into the interior. Huge Saharan salt mines supplied the life-sustaining mineral to the Mediterranean coast of Africa and inland areas. By 900, the monotheistic Muslims controlled most of this trade and had converted many of the African ruling elite. The majority of the population, however, maintained their tribal animistic practices, which gave living attributes to nonliving objects such as mountains, rivers, and wind. Because Ghana's king controlled the gold supply, he was able to maintain price controls and afford a strong military. Soon, however, a new kingdom emerged.

## African Empires Prior to 1500 CE



This map shows the locations of the major West African empires before 1492. Along the Mediterranean coast, Muslim states prevailed.

By 1200 CE, under the leadership of Sundiata Keita, Mali had replaced Ghana as the leading state in West Africa. After Sundiata's rule, the court



converted to Islam, and Muslim scribes played a large part in administration and government. Miners then discovered huge new deposits of gold east of the Niger River. By the fourteenth century, the empire was so wealthy that while on a *hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, Mali's ruler Mansu Musa gave away enough gold to create serious price inflation in the cities along his route. Timbuktu, the capital city, became a leading Islamic center for education, commerce and the slave trade. Meanwhile, in the east, the city of Gao became increasingly strong under the leadership of Sonni Ali and soon eclipsed Mali's power. Timbuktu sought Ali's assistance in repelling the Tuaregs from the north. By 1500, however, the Tuareg empire of Songhay had eclipsed Mali, where weak and ineffective leadership prevailed.

## THE ROLE OF SLAVERY

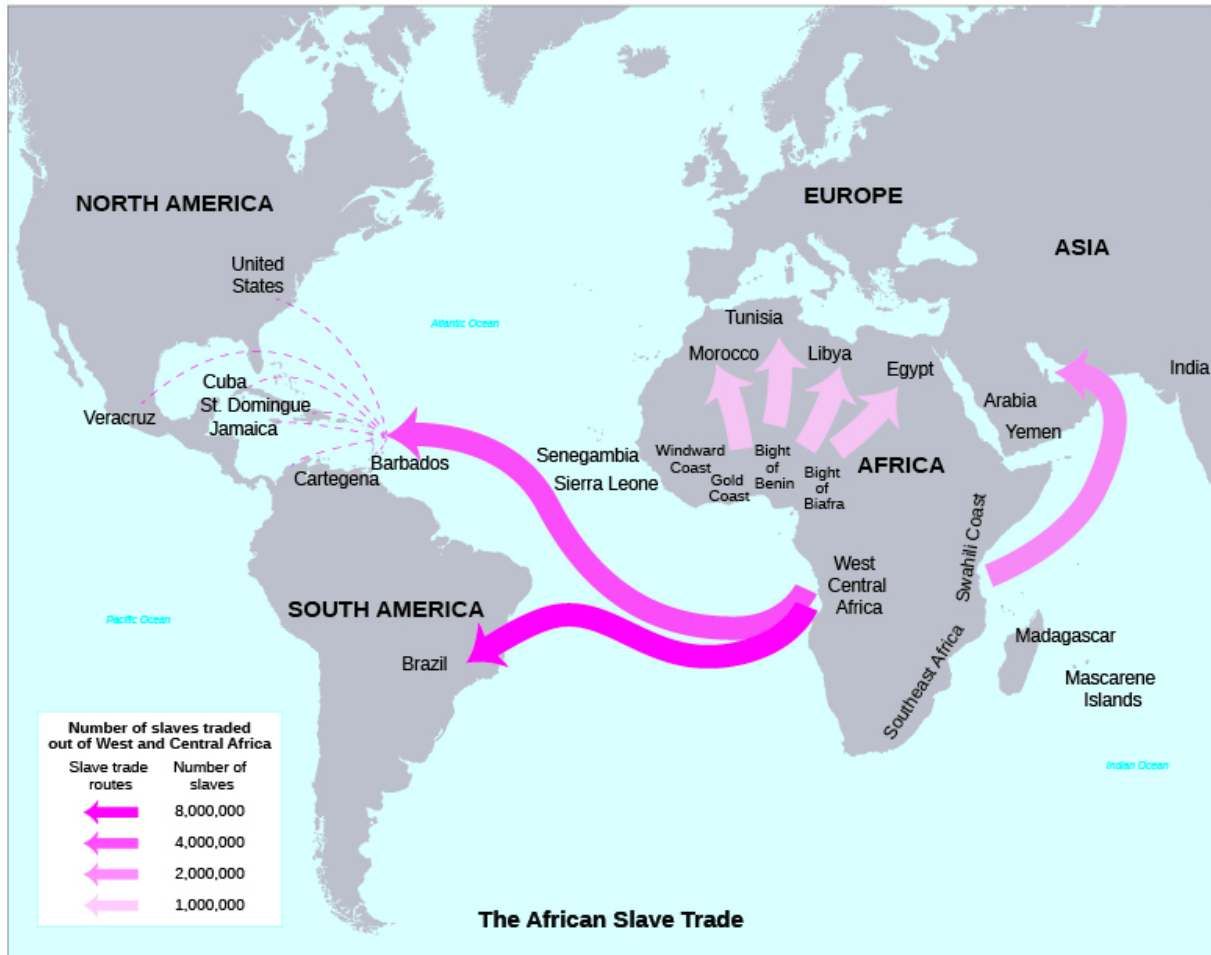
The institution of slavery is not a recent phenomenon. Most civilizations have practiced some form of human bondage and servitude, and African empires were no different ([\[link\]](#)). Famine or fear of stronger enemies might force one tribe to ask another for help and give themselves in a type of bondage in exchange. Similar to the European serf system, those seeking protection, or relief from starvation, would become the servants of those who provided relief. Debt might also be worked off through a form of servitude. Typically, these servants became a part of the extended tribal family. There is some evidence of **chattel slavery**, in which people are treated as personal property to be bought and sold, in the Nile Valley. It appears there was a slave-trade route through the Sahara that brought sub-Saharan Africans to Rome, which had slaves from all over the world.



Traders with a group of slaves. Note how the slaves are connected at the neck. Muslim traders brought slaves to the North African coast, where they might be sent to Europe or other parts of Africa.

Arab slave trading, which exchanged slaves for goods from the Mediterranean, existed long before Islam's spread across North Africa. Muslims later expanded this trade and enslaved not only Africans but also Europeans, especially from Spain, Sicily, and Italy. Male captives were forced to build coastal fortifications and serve as galley slaves. Women were added to the harem.

The major European slave trade began with Portugal's exploration of the west coast of Africa in search of a trade route to the East. By 1444, slaves were being brought from Africa to work on the sugar plantations of the Madeira Islands, off the coast of modern Morocco. The slave trade then expanded greatly as European colonies in the New World demanded an ever-increasing number of workers for the extensive plantations growing tobacco, sugar, and eventually rice and cotton ([\[link\]](#)).



This map shows the routes that were used in the course of the slave trade and the number of enslaved people who traveled each route. As the figures indicate, most African slaves were bound for Brazil and the Caribbean. While West Africans made up the vast majority of the enslaved, the east coast of Africa, too, supplied slaves for the trade.

In the New World, the institution of slavery assumed a new aspect when the mercantilist system demanded a permanent, identifiable, and plentiful labor supply. African slaves were both easily identified (by their skin color) and plentiful, because of the thriving slave trade. This led to a race-based slavery system in the New World unlike any bondage system that had come before. Initially, the Spanish tried to force Indians to farm their crops. Most Spanish and Portuguese settlers coming to the New World were gentlemen

and did not perform physical labor. They came to “serve God, but also to get rich,” as noted by Bernal Díaz del Castillo. However, enslaved natives tended to sicken or die from disease or from the overwork and cruel treatment they were subjected to, and so the indigenous peoples proved not to be a dependable source of labor. Although he later repented of his ideas, the great defender of the Indians, Bartolomé de Las Casas, seeing the near extinction of the native population, suggested the Spanish send black (and white) laborers to the Indies. These workers proved hardier, and within fifty years, a change took place: The profitability of the African slave trade, coupled with the seemingly limitless number of potential slaves and the Catholic Church’s denunciation of the enslavement of Christians, led race to become a dominant factor in the institution of slavery.

In the English colonies along the Atlantic coast, indentured servants initially filled the need for labor in the North, where family farms were the norm. In the South, however, labor-intensive crops such as tobacco, rice, and indigo prevailed, and eventually the supply of indentured servants was insufficient to meet the demand. These workers served only for periods of three to seven years before being freed; a more permanent labor supply was needed. Thus, whereas in Africa permanent, inherited slavery was unknown, and children of those bound in slavery to the tribe usually were free and intermarried with their captors, this changed in the Americas; slavery became permanent, and children born to slaves became slaves. This development, along with slavery’s identification with race, forever changed the institution and shaped its unique character in the New World.

**Note:****The Beginnings of Racial Slavery**

Slavery has a long history. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle posited that some peoples were *homunculi*, or humanlike but not really people—for instance, if they did not speak Greek. Both the Bible and the Koran have passages that address the treatment of slaves. Vikings who raided from Ireland to Russia brought back slaves of all nationalities. During the Middle Ages, traders from the interior of Africa brought slaves along well-established routes to sell them along the Mediterranean coast. Initially,

slavers also brought European slaves to the Caribbean. Many of these were orphaned or homeless children captured in the cities of Ireland. The question is, when did slavery become based on race? This appears to have developed in the New World, with the introduction of grueling labor-intensive crops such as sugar and coffee. Unable to fill their growing need from the ranks of prisoners or indentured servants, the European colonists turned to African laborers. The Portuguese, although seeking a trade route to India, also set up forts along the West African coast for the purpose of exporting slaves to Europe. Historians believe that by the year 1500, 10 percent of the population of Lisbon and Seville consisted of black slaves. Because of the influence of the Catholic Church, which frowned on the enslavement of Christians, European slave traders expanded their reach down the coast of Africa.

When Europeans settled Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America, they thus established a system of racially based slavery. Here, the need for a massive labor force was greater than in western Europe. The land was ripe for growing sugar, coffee, rice, and ultimately cotton. To fulfill the ever-growing demand for these crops, large plantations were created. The success of these plantations depended upon the availability of a permanent, plentiful, identifiable, and skilled labor supply. As Africans were already familiar with animal husbandry as well as farming, had an identifying skin color, and could be readily supplied by the existing African slave trade, they proved the answer to this need. This process set the stage for the expansion of New World slavery into North America.

## Section Summary

Before 1492, Africa, like the Americas, had experienced the rise and fall of many cultures, but the continent did not develop a centralized authority structure. African peoples practiced various forms of slavery, all of which differed significantly from the racial slavery that ultimately developed in the New World. After the arrival of Islam and before the Portuguese came to the coast of West Africa in 1444, Muslims controlled the slave trade out of Africa, which expanded as European powers began to colonize the New World. Driven by a demand for labor, slavery in the Americas developed a

new form: It was based on race, and the status of slave was both permanent and inherited.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

The city of \_\_\_\_\_ became a leading center for Muslim scholarship and trade.

- A. Cairo
- B. Timbuktu
- C. Morocco
- D. Mali

---

#### Solution:

B

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following does *not* describe a form of slavery traditionally practiced in Africa?

- A. a system in which those in need of supplies or protection give themselves in servitude
- B. a system in which debtors repay those whom they owe by giving themselves in servitude
- C. a system in which people are treated as chattel—that is, as personal property to be bought and sold
- D. a system in which people are enslaved permanently on account of their race

---

**Solution:**

D

**Critical Thinking Questions****Exercise:****Problem:**

The Inca were able to control an empire that stretched from modern Colombia to southern Chile. Which of their various means for achieving such control do you think were most effective, and why?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

How did the Olmec, Aztec, Inca, Maya, and North American Indians differ in their ways of life and cultural achievements? How did their particular circumstances—geography, history, or the accomplishments of the societies that had preceded them, for example—serve to shape their particular traditions and cultures?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What were the lasting effects of the Crusades? In what ways did they provide opportunities—both negative and positive—for cross-cultural encounters and exchanges?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Was race identified with slavery before the era of European exploration? Why or why not? How did slavery's association with race change the institution's character?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What are the differences between the types of slavery traditionally practiced in Africa and the slavery that developed in the New World? How did other types of servitude, such as European serfdom, compare to slavery?

**Glossary**

chattel slavery

a system of servitude in which people are treated as personal property to be bought and sold

polygyny

the practice of taking more than one wife



## Chapter 2: The New World

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe how Europeans solved their labor problems
- Describe the theory of mercantilism and the process of commodification
- Analyze the effects of the Columbian Exchange

European promoters of colonization claimed the Americas overflowed with a wealth of treasures. Burnishing national glory and honor became entwined with carving out colonies, and no nation wanted to be left behind. However, the realities of life in the Americas—violence, exploitation, and particularly the need for workers—were soon driving the practice of slavery and forced labor. Everywhere in America a stark contrast existed between freedom and slavery. The Columbian Exchange, in which Europeans transported plants, animals, and diseases across the Atlantic in both directions, also left a lasting impression on the Americas.

### LABOR SYSTEMS

Physical power—to work the fields, build villages, process raw materials—is a necessity for maintaining a society. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, humans could derive power only from the wind, water, animals, or other humans. Everywhere in the Americas, a crushing demand for labor bedeviled Europeans because there were not enough colonists to perform the work necessary to keep the colonies going. Spain granted *encomiendas*—legal rights to native labor—to conquistadors who could prove their service to the crown. This system reflected the Spanish view of colonization: the king rewarded successful conquistadors who expanded the empire. Some native peoples who had sided with the conquistadors, like the Tlaxcalan, also gained *encomiendas*; Malintzin, the Nahua woman who helped Cortés defeat the Mexica, was granted one.

The Spanish believed native peoples would work for them by right of conquest, and, in return, the Spanish would bring them Catholicism. In theory the relationship consisted of reciprocal obligations, but in practice the Spaniards ruthlessly exploited it, seeing native people as little more than

beasts of burden. Convinced of their right to the land and its peoples, they sought both to control native labor and to impose what they viewed as correct religious beliefs upon the land's inhabitants. Native peoples everywhere resisted both the labor obligations and the effort to change their ancient belief systems. Indeed, many retained their religion or incorporated only the parts of Catholicism that made sense to them.

The system of *encomiendas* was accompanied by a great deal of violence ([link](#)). One Spaniard, Bartolomé de Las Casas, denounced the brutality of Spanish rule. A Dominican friar, Las Casas had been one of the earliest Spanish settlers in the Spanish West Indies. In his early life in the Americas, he owned Indian slaves and was the recipient of an *encomienda*. However, after witnessing the savagery with which *encomenderos* (recipients of *encomiendas*) treated the native people, he reversed his views. In 1515, Las Casas released his native slaves, gave up his *encomienda*, and began to advocate for humane treatment of native peoples. He lobbied for new legislation, eventually known as the New Laws, which would eliminate slavery and the *encomienda* system.



In this startling image from

the Kingsborough Codex  
(a book written and drawn  
by native Mesoamericans),  
a well-dressed Spaniard is  
shown pulling the hair of a  
bleeding, severely injured  
native. The drawing was  
part of a complaint about  
Spanish abuses of their  
*encomiendas*.

Las Casas's writing about the Spaniards' horrific treatment of Indians helped inspire the so-called **Black Legend**, the idea that the Spanish were bloodthirsty conquerors with no regard for human life. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who held this view of the Spanish were Spain's imperial rivals. English writers and others seized on the idea of Spain's ruthlessness to support their own colonization projects. By demonizing the Spanish, they justified their own efforts as more humane. All European colonizers, however, shared a disregard for Indians.

**Note:**

**Bartolomé de Las Casas on the Mistreatment of Indians**

Bartolomé de Las Casas's *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, written in 1542 and published ten years later, detailed for Prince Philip II of Spain how Spanish colonists had been mistreating natives.

"Into and among these gentle sheep, endowed by their Maker and Creator with all the qualities aforesaid, did creep the Spaniards, who no sooner had knowledge of these people than they became like fierce wolves and tigers and lions who have gone many days without food or nourishment. And no other thing have they done for forty years until this day, and still today see fit to do, but dismember, slay, perturb, afflict, torment, and destroy the Indians by all manner of cruelty—new and divers and most singular manners such as never before seen or read or heard of—some few of which

shall be recounted below, and they do this to such a degree that on the Island of Hispaniola, of the above three millions souls that we once saw, today there be no more than two hundred of those native people remaining. . . ."

"Two principal and general customs have been employed by those, calling themselves Christians, who have passed this way, in extirpating and striking from the face of the earth those suffering nations. The first being unjust, cruel, bloody, and tyrannical warfare. The other—after having slain all those who might yearn toward or suspire after or think of freedom, or consider escaping from the torments that they are made to suffer, by which I mean all the native-born lords and adult males, for it is the Spaniards' custom in their wars to allow only young boys and females to live—being to oppress them with the hardest, harshest, and most heinous bondage to which men or beasts might ever be bound into."

How might these writings have been used to promote the “black legend” against Spain as well as subsequent English exploration and colonization?

Indians were not the only source of cheap labor in the Americas; by the middle of the sixteenth century, Africans formed an important element of the labor landscape, producing the cash crops of sugar and tobacco for European markets. Europeans viewed Africans as non-Christians, which they used as a justification for enslavement. Denied control over their lives, slaves endured horrendous conditions. At every opportunity, they resisted enslavement, and their resistance was met with violence. Indeed, physical, mental, and sexual violence formed a key strategy among European slaveholders in their effort to assert mastery and impose their will. The Portuguese led the way in the evolving transport of slaves across the Atlantic; slave “factories” on the west coast of Africa, like Elmina Castle in Ghana, served as holding pens for slaves brought from Africa’s interior. In time, other European imperial powers would follow in the footsteps of the Portuguese by constructing similar outposts on the coast of West Africa.

The Portuguese traded or sold slaves to Spanish, Dutch, and English colonists in the Americas, particularly in South America and the Caribbean, where sugar was a primary export. Thousands of African slaves found

themselves growing, harvesting, and processing **sugarcane** in an arduous routine of physical labor. Slaves had to cut the long cane stalks by hand and then bring them to a mill, where the cane juice was extracted. They boiled the extracted cane juice down to a brown, crystalline sugar, which then had to be cured in special curing houses to have the molasses drained from it. The result was refined sugar, while the leftover molasses could be distilled into rum. Every step was labor-intensive and often dangerous.

Las Casas estimated that by 1550, there were fifty thousand slaves on Hispaniola. However, it is a mistake to assume that during the very early years of European exploration all Africans came to America as slaves; some were free men who took part in expeditions, for example, serving as conquistadors alongside Cortés in his assault on Tenochtitlán. Nonetheless, African slavery was one of the most tragic outcomes in the emerging Atlantic World.

**Note:**

Browse the PBS collection [Africans in America: Part 1](#) to see information and primary sources for the period 1450 through 1750.

## COMMERCE IN THE NEW WORLD

The economic philosophy of **mercantilism** shaped European perceptions of wealth from the 1500s to the late 1700s. Mercantilism held that only a limited amount of wealth, as measured in gold and silver bullion, existed in the world. In order to gain power, nations had to amass wealth by mining these precious raw materials from their colonial possessions. During the age of European exploration, nations employed conquest, colonization, and trade as ways to increase their share of the bounty of the New World. Mercantilists did not believe in free trade, arguing instead that the nation should control trade to create wealth. In this view, colonies existed to strengthen the colonizing nation. Mercantilists argued against allowing their nations to trade freely with other nations.

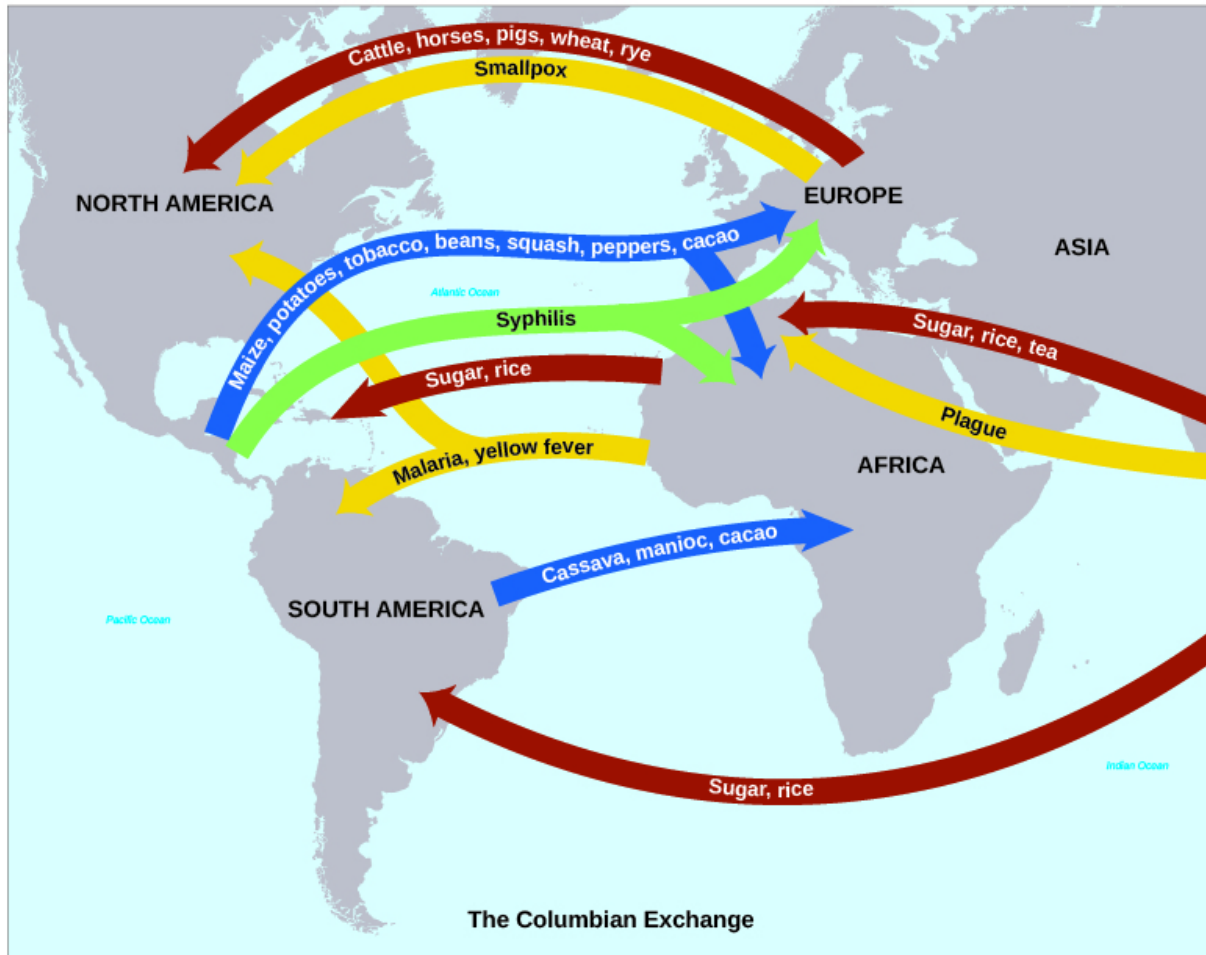
Spain's mercantilist ideas guided its economic policy. Every year, slaves or native workers loaded shipments of gold and silver aboard Spanish treasure fleets that sailed from Cuba for Spain. These ships groaned under the sheer weight of bullion, for the Spanish had found huge caches of silver and gold in the New World. In South America, for example, Spaniards discovered rich veins of silver ore in the mountain called Potosí and founded a settlement of the same name there. Throughout the sixteenth century, Potosí was a boom town, attracting settlers from many nations as well as native people from many different cultures.

Colonial mercantilism, which was basically a set of protectionist policies designed to benefit the nation, relied on several factors: colonies rich in raw materials, cheap labor, colonial loyalty to the home government, and control of the shipping trade. Under this system, the colonies sent their raw materials, harvested by slaves or native workers, back to their mother country. The mother country sent back finished materials of all sorts: textiles, tools, clothing. The colonists could purchase these goods *only* from their mother country; trade with other countries was forbidden.

The 1500s and early 1600s also introduced the process of **commodification** to the New World. American silver, tobacco, and other items, which were used by native peoples for ritual purposes, became European commodities with a monetary value that could be bought and sold. Before the arrival of the Spanish, for example, the Inca people of the Andes consumed *chicha*, a corn beer, for ritual purposes only. When the Spanish discovered chicha, they bought and traded for it, turning it into a commodity instead of a ritual substance. Commodification thus recast native economies and spurred the process of early commercial capitalism. New World resources, from plants to animal pelts, held the promise of wealth for European imperial powers.

## THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

As Europeans traversed the Atlantic, they brought with them plants, animals, and diseases that changed lives and landscapes on both sides of the ocean. These two-way exchanges between the Americas and Europe/Africa are known collectively as the **Columbian Exchange** ([\[link\]](#)).



With European exploration and settlement of the New World, goods and diseases began crossing the Atlantic Ocean in both directions. This “Columbian Exchange” soon had global implications.

Of all the commodities in the Atlantic World, sugar proved to be the most important. Indeed, sugar carried the same economic importance as oil does today. European rivals raced to create sugar plantations in the Americas and fought wars for control of some of the best sugar production areas. Although refined sugar was available in the Old World, Europe’s harsher climate made sugarcane difficult to grow, and it was not plentiful. Columbus brought sugar to Hispaniola in 1493, and the new crop was growing there by the end of the 1490s. By the first decades of the 1500s, the Spanish were building sugar mills on the island. Over the next century of

colonization, Caribbean islands and most other tropical areas became centers of sugar production.

Though of secondary importance to sugar, tobacco achieved great value for Europeans as a cash crop as well. Native peoples had been growing it for medicinal and ritual purposes for centuries before European contact, smoking it in pipes or powdering it to use as snuff. They believed tobacco could improve concentration and enhance wisdom. To some, its use meant achieving an entranced, altered, or divine state; entering a spiritual place.

Tobacco was unknown in Europe before 1492, and it carried a negative stigma at first. The early Spanish explorers considered natives' use of tobacco to be proof of their savagery and, because of the fire and smoke produced in the consumption of tobacco, evidence of the Devil's sway in the New World. Gradually, however, European colonists became accustomed to and even took up the habit of smoking, and they brought it across the Atlantic. As did the Indians, Europeans ascribed medicinal properties to tobacco, claiming that it could cure headaches and skin irritations. Even so, Europeans did not import tobacco in great quantities until the 1590s. At that time, it became the first truly global commodity; English, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese colonists all grew it for the world market.

Native peoples also introduced Europeans to chocolate, made from cacao seeds and used by the Aztec in Mesoamerica as currency. Mesoamerican Indians consumed unsweetened chocolate in a drink with chili peppers, vanilla, and a spice called achiote. This chocolate drink—*xocolatl*—was part of ritual ceremonies like marriage and an everyday item for those who could afford it. Chocolate contains theobromine, a stimulant, which may be why native people believed it brought them closer to the sacred world.

Spaniards in the New World considered drinking chocolate a vile practice; one called chocolate “the Devil's vomit.” In time, however, they introduced the beverage to Spain. At first, chocolate was available only in the Spanish court, where the elite mixed it with sugar and other spices. Later, as its availability spread, chocolate gained a reputation as a love potion.



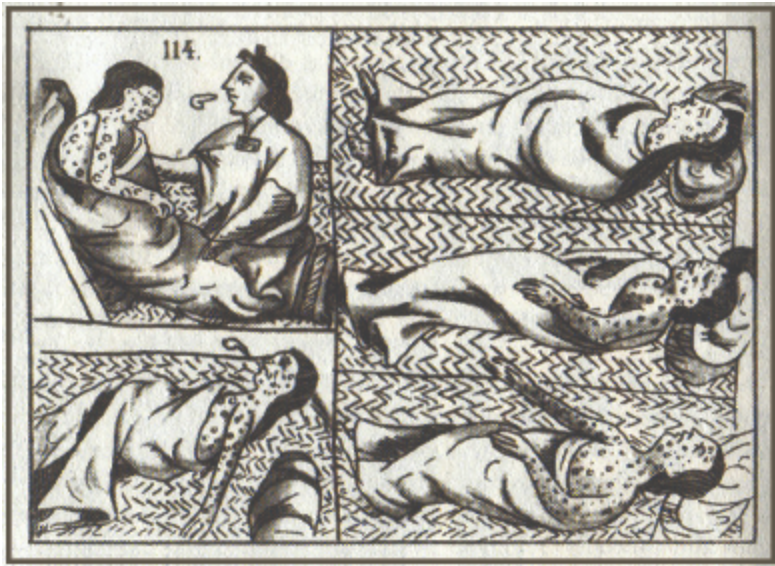
**Note:**

Visit [Nature Transformed](#) for a collection of scholarly essays on the environment in American history.

The crossing of the Atlantic by plants like cacao and tobacco illustrates the ways in which the discovery of the New World changed the habits and behaviors of Europeans. Europeans changed the New World in turn, not least by bringing Old World animals to the Americas. On his second voyage, Christopher Columbus brought pigs, horses, cows, and chickens to the islands of the Caribbean. Later explorers followed suit, introducing new animals or reintroducing ones that had died out (like horses). With less vulnerability to disease, these animals often fared better than humans in their new home, thriving both in the wild and in domestication.

Europeans encountered New World animals as well. Because European Christians understood the world as a place of warfare between God and Satan, many believed the Americas, which lacked Christianity, were home to the Devil and his minions. The exotic, sometimes bizarre, appearances and habits of animals in the Americas that were previously unknown to Europeans, such as manatees, sloths, and poisonous snakes, confirmed this association. Over time, however, they began to rely more on observation of the natural world than solely on scripture. This shift—from seeing the Bible as the source of all received wisdom to trusting observation or empiricism—is one of the major outcomes of the era of early globalization.

Travelers between the Americas, Africa, and Europe also included microbes: silent, invisible life forms that had profound and devastating consequences. Native peoples had no immunity to diseases from across the Atlantic, to which they had never been exposed. European explorers unwittingly brought with them chickenpox, measles, mumps, and **smallpox**, which ravaged native peoples despite their attempts to treat the diseases, decimating some populations and wholly destroying others ([link](#)).



This sixteenth-century Aztec drawing shows the suffering of a typical victim of smallpox. Smallpox and other contagious diseases brought by European explorers decimated Indian populations in the Americas.

In eastern North America, some native peoples interpreted death from disease as a hostile act. Some groups, including the Iroquois, engaged in raids or “**mourning wars**,” taking enemy prisoners in order to assuage their grief and replace the departed. In a special ritual, the prisoners were “requickened”—assigned the identity of a dead person—and adopted by the bereaved family to take the place of their dead. As the toll from disease rose, mourning wars intensified and expanded.

## Section Summary

In the minds of European rulers, colonies existed to create wealth for imperial powers. Guided by mercantilist ideas, European rulers and investors hoped to enrich their own nations and themselves, in order to gain the greatest share of what was believed to be a limited amount of wealth. In

their own individual quest for riches and preeminence, European colonizers who traveled to the Americas blazed new and disturbing paths, such as the *encomienda* system of forced labor and the use of tens of thousands of Africans as slaves.

All native inhabitants of the Americas who came into contact with Europeans found their worlds turned upside down as the new arrivals introduced their religions and ideas about property and goods. Europeans gained new foods, plants, and animals in the Columbian Exchange, turning whatever they could into a commodity to be bought and sold, and Indians were introduced to diseases that nearly destroyed them. At every turn, however, Indians placed limits on European colonization and resisted the newcomers' ways.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** How could Spaniards obtain *encomiendas*?

- A. by serving the Spanish crown
- B. by buying them from other Spaniards
- C. by buying them from native chiefs
- D. by inheriting them

---

### Solution:

A

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following best describes the Columbian Exchange?

- A. the letters Columbus and other conquistadors exchanged with the Spanish crown

- B. an exchange of plants, animals, and diseases between Europe and the Americas
  - C. a form of trade between the Spanish and natives
  - D. the way in which explorers exchanged information about new lands to conquer
- 

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** Why did diseases like smallpox affect Indians so badly?

- A. Indians were less robust than Europeans.
  - B. Europeans deliberately infected Indians.
  - C. Indians had no immunity to European diseases.
  - D. Conditions in the Americas were so harsh that Indians and Europeans alike were devastated by disease.
- 

**Solution:**

C

## Critical Thinking Questions

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What were the consequences of the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What types of labor systems were used in the Americas? Did systems of unfree labor serve more than an economic function?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What is meant by the Columbian Exchange? Who was affected the most by the exchange?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What were the various goals of the colonial European powers in the expansion of their empires? To what extent were they able to achieve these goals? Where did they fail?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

On the whole, what was the impact of early European explorations on the New World? What was the impact of the New World on Europeans?

**Glossary****Black Legend**

Spain's reputation as bloodthirsty conquistadors

**Columbian Exchange**

the movement of plants, animals, and diseases across the Atlantic due to European exploration of the Americas

**commodification**

the transformation of something—for example, an item of ritual significance—into a commodity with monetary value

*encomienda*

legal rights to native labor as granted by the Spanish crown

mercantilism

the protectionist economic principle that nations should control trade with their colonies to ensure a favorable balance of trade

mourning wars

raids or wars that tribes waged in eastern North America in order to replace members lost to smallpox and other diseases

smallpox

a disease that Europeans accidentally brought to the New World, killing millions of Indians, who had no immunity to the disease

sugarcane

one of the primary crops of the Americas, which required a tremendous amount of labor to cultivate

## Chapter 3: Colonization

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the reasons for the rise of slavery in the American colonies
- Describe changes to Indian life, including warfare and hunting
- Contrast European and Indian views on property
- Assess the impact of European settlement on the environment

As Europeans moved beyond exploration and into colonization of the Americas, they brought changes to virtually every aspect of the land and its people, from trade and hunting to warfare and personal property. European goods, ideas, and diseases shaped the changing continent.

As Europeans established their colonies, their societies also became segmented and divided along religious and racial lines. Most people in these societies were not free; they labored as servants or slaves, doing the work required to produce wealth for others. By 1700, the American continent had become a place of stark contrasts between slavery and freedom, between the haves and the have-nots.

### **THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY**

Everywhere in the American colonies, a crushing demand for labor existed to grow New World cash crops, especially sugar and tobacco. This need led Europeans to rely increasingly on Africans, and after 1600, the movement of Africans across the Atlantic accelerated. The English crown chartered the Royal African Company in 1672, giving the company a monopoly over the transport of African slaves to the English colonies. Over the next four decades, the company transported around 350,000 Africans from their homelands. By 1700, the tiny English sugar island of Barbados had a population of fifty thousand slaves, and the English had encoded the institution of chattel slavery into colonial law.

This new system of African slavery came slowly to the English colonists, who did not have slavery at home and preferred to use servant labor. Nevertheless, by the end of the seventeenth century, the English everywhere in America—and particularly in the Chesapeake Bay colonies—had come

to rely on African slaves. While Africans had long practiced slavery among their own people, it had not been based on race. Africans enslaved other Africans as war captives, for crimes, and to settle debts; they generally used their slaves for domestic and small-scale agricultural work, not for growing cash crops on large plantations. Additionally, African slavery was often a temporary condition rather than a lifelong sentence, and, unlike New World slavery, it was typically not heritable (passed from a slave mother to her children).

The growing slave trade with Europeans had a profound impact on the people of West Africa, giving prominence to local chieftains and merchants who traded slaves for European textiles, alcohol, guns, tobacco, and food. Africans also charged Europeans for the right to trade in slaves and imposed taxes on slave purchases. Different African groups and kingdoms even staged large-scale raids on each other to meet the demand for slaves.

Once sold to traders, all slaves sent to America endured the hellish **Middle Passage**, the transatlantic crossing, which took one to two months. By 1625, more than 325,800 Africans had been shipped to the New World, though many thousands perished during the voyage. An astonishing number, some four million, were transported to the Caribbean between 1501 and 1830. When they reached their destination in America, Africans found themselves trapped in shockingly brutal slave societies. In the Chesapeake colonies, they faced a lifetime of harvesting and processing tobacco.

Everywhere, Africans resisted slavery, and running away was common. In Jamaica and elsewhere, runaway slaves created **maroon communities**, groups that resisted recapture and eked out a living from the land, rebuilding their communities as best they could. When possible, they adhered to traditional ways, following spiritual leaders such as Vodun priests.

## CHANGES TO INDIAN LIFE

While the Americas remained firmly under the control of native peoples in the first decades of European settlement, conflict increased as colonization



spread and Europeans placed greater demands upon the native populations, including expecting them to convert to Christianity (either Catholicism or Protestantism). Throughout the seventeenth century, the still-powerful native peoples and confederacies that retained control of the land waged war against the invading Europeans, achieving a degree of success in their effort to drive the newcomers from the continent.

At the same time, European goods had begun to change Indian life radically. In the 1500s, some of the earliest objects Europeans introduced to Indians were glass beads, copper kettles, and metal utensils. Native people often adapted these items for their own use. For example, some cut up copper kettles and refashioned the metal for other uses, including jewelry that conferred status on the wearer, who was seen as connected to the new European source of raw materials.

As European settlements grew throughout the 1600s, European goods flooded native communities. Soon native people were using these items for the same purposes as the Europeans. For example, many native inhabitants abandoned their animal-skin clothing in favor of European textiles. Similarly, clay cookware gave way to metal cooking implements, and Indians found that European flint and steel made starting fires much easier ([link](#)).



In this 1681 portrait, the  
Niantic-Narragansett chief  
Ninigret wears a  
combination of European  
and Indian goods. Which  
elements of each culture  
are evident in this portrait?

The abundance of European goods gave rise to new artistic objects. For example, iron awls made the creation of shell beads among the native people of the Eastern Woodlands much easier, and the result was an astonishing increase in the production of **wampum**, shell beads used in ceremonies and as jewelry and currency. Native peoples had always placed goods in the graves of their departed, and this practice escalated with the arrival of European goods. Archaeologists have found enormous caches of European trade goods in the graves of Indians on the East Coast.

Native weapons changed dramatically as well, creating an arms race among the peoples living in European colonization zones. Indians refashioned European brassware into arrow points and turned axes used for chopping wood into weapons. The most prized piece of European weaponry to obtain was a **musket**, or light, long-barreled European gun. In order to trade with Europeans for these, native peoples intensified their harvesting of beaver, commercializing their traditional practice.

The influx of European materials made warfare more lethal and changed traditional patterns of authority among tribes. Formerly weaker groups, if they had access to European metal and weapons, suddenly gained the upper hand against once-dominant groups. The Algonquian, for instance, traded with the French for muskets and gained power against their enemies, the Iroquois. Eventually, native peoples also used their new weapons against the European colonizers who had provided them.

**Note:**

Explore the complexity of [Indian-European relationships](#) in the series of primary source documents on the National Humanities Center site.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The European presence in America spurred countless changes in the environment, setting into motion chains of events that affected native animals as well as people. The popularity of beaver-trimmed hats in Europe, coupled with Indians' desire for European weapons, led to the overhunting of beaver in the Northeast. Soon, beavers were extinct in New England, New York, and other areas. With their loss came the loss of beaver ponds, which had served as habitats for fish as well as water sources for deer, moose, and other animals. Furthermore, Europeans introduced pigs, which they allowed to forage in forests and other wildlands. Pigs consumed the foods on which deer and other indigenous species depended, resulting in scarcity of the game native peoples had traditionally hunted.

European ideas about owning land as private property clashed with natives' understanding of land use. Native peoples did not believe in private ownership of land; instead, they viewed land as a resource to be held in common for the benefit of the group. The European idea of usufruct—the right to common land use and enjoyment—comes close to the native understanding, but colonists did not practice usufruct widely in America. Colonizers established fields, fences, and other means of demarcating private property. Native peoples who moved seasonally to take advantage of natural resources now found areas off limits, claimed by colonizers because of their insistence on private-property rights.

### The Introduction of Disease

Perhaps European colonization's single greatest impact on the North American environment was the introduction of disease. Microbes to which native inhabitants had no immunity led to death everywhere Europeans

settled. Along the New England coast between 1616 and 1618, epidemics claimed the lives of 75 percent of the native people. In the 1630s, half the Huron and Iroquois around the Great Lakes died of smallpox. As is often the case with disease, the very young and the very old were the most vulnerable and had the highest mortality rates. The loss of the older generation meant the loss of knowledge and tradition, while the death of children only compounded the trauma, creating devastating implications for future generations.

Some native peoples perceived disease as a weapon used by hostile spiritual forces, and they went to war to exorcise the disease from their midst. These “mourning wars” in eastern North America were designed to gain captives who would either be adopted (“requickened” as a replacement for a deceased loved one) or ritually tortured and executed to assuage the anger and grief caused by loss.

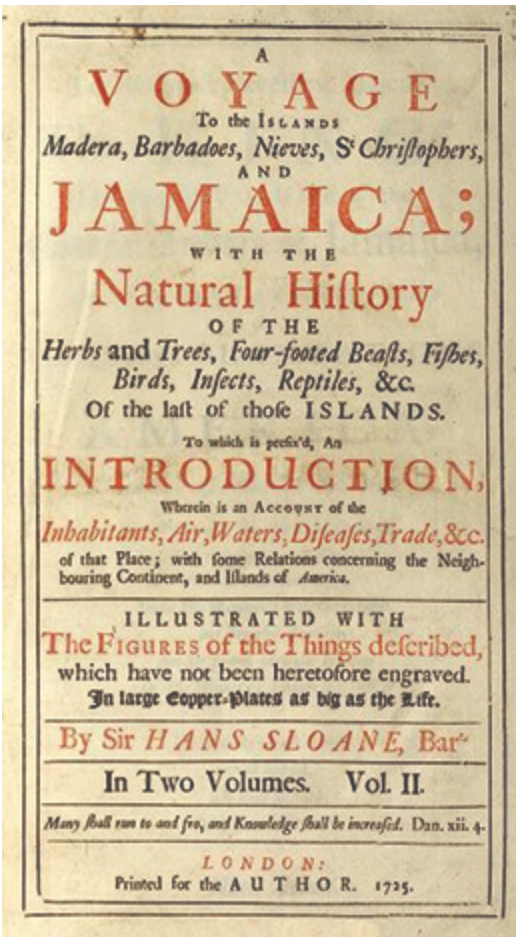
## **The Cultivation of Plants**

European expansion in the Americas led to an unprecedented movement of plants across the Atlantic. A prime example is tobacco, which became a valuable export as the habit of smoking, previously unknown in Europe, took hold ([link](#)). Another example is sugar. Columbus brought sugarcane to the Caribbean on his second voyage in 1494, and thereafter a wide variety of other herbs, flowers, seeds, and roots made the transatlantic voyage.



Adriaen van Ostade, a Dutch artist, painted *An Apothecary Smoking in an Interior* in 1646. The large European market for American tobacco strongly influenced the development of some of the American colonies.

Just as pharmaceutical companies today scour the natural world for new drugs, Europeans traveled to America to discover new medicines. The task of cataloging the new plants found there helped give birth to the science of botany. Early botanists included the English naturalist Sir Hans Sloane, who traveled to Jamaica in 1687 and there recorded hundreds of new plants ([link](#)). Sloane also helped popularize the drinking of chocolate, made from the cacao bean, in England.



English naturalist Sir Hans Sloane traveled to Jamaica and other Caribbean islands to catalog the flora of the new world.

Indians, who possessed a vast understanding of local New World plants and their properties, would have been a rich source of information for those European botanists seeking to find and catalog potentially useful plants. Enslaved Africans, who had a tradition of the use of medicinal plants in their native land, adapted to their new surroundings by learning the use of New World plants through experimentation or from the native inhabitants. Native peoples and Africans employed their knowledge effectively within their own communities. One notable example was the use of the peacock

flower to induce abortions: Indian and enslaved African women living in oppressive colonial regimes are said to have used this herb to prevent the birth of children into slavery. Europeans distrusted medical knowledge that came from African or native sources, however, and thus lost the benefit of this source of information.

## Section Summary

The development of the Atlantic slave trade forever changed the course of European settlement in the Americas. Other transatlantic travelers, including diseases, goods, plants, animals, and even ideas like the concept of private land ownership, further influenced life in America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The exchange of pelts for European goods including copper kettles, knives, and guns played a significant role in changing the material cultures of native peoples. During the seventeenth century, native peoples grew increasingly dependent on European trade items. At the same time, many native inhabitants died of European diseases, while survivors adopted new ways of living with their new neighbors.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** What was the Middle Passage?

- A. the fabled sea route from Europe to the Far East
- B. the land route from Europe to Africa
- C. the transatlantic journey that African slaves made to America
- D. the line between the northern and southern colonies

---

### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

Which of the following is *not* an item Europeans introduced to Indians?

- A. wampum
- B. glass beads
- C. copper kettles
- D. metal tools

---

**Solution:**

A

**Exercise:****Problem:**

How did European muskets change life for native peoples in the Americas?

---

**Solution:**

European guns started an arms race among Indian groups. Tribes with ties to Europeans had a distinct advantage in wars with other tribes because muskets were so much more effective than bows and arrows. Guns changed the balance of power among different groups and tribes and made combat more deadly.

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Compare and contrast European and Indian views on property.

---

**Solution:**

Indians didn't have any concept of owning personal property and believed that land should be held in common, for use by a group. They



used land as they needed, often moving from area to area to follow food sources at different times of year. Europeans saw land as something individuals could own, and they used fences and other markers to define their property.

## **Critical Thinking Questions**

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

Compare and contrast life in the Spanish, French, Dutch, and English colonies, differentiating between the Chesapeake Bay and New England colonies. Who were the colonizers? What were their purposes in being there? How did they interact with their environments and the native inhabitants of the lands on which they settled?

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

Describe the attempts of the various European colonists to convert native peoples to their belief systems. How did these attempts compare to one another? What were the results of each effort?

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

How did chattel slavery differ from indentured servitude? How did the former system come to replace the latter? What were the results of this shift?

### **Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What impact did Europeans have on their New World environments—native peoples and their communities as well as land, plants, and animals? Conversely, what impact did the New World's native inhabitants, land, plants, and animals have on Europeans? How did the interaction of European and Indian societies, together, shape a world that was truly “new”?

**Glossary**

maroon communities

groups of runaway slaves who resisted recapture and eked a living from the land

Middle Passage

the perilous, often deadly transatlantic crossing of slave ships from the African coast to the New World

musket

a light, long-barreled European gun

wampum

shell beads used in ceremonies and as jewelry and currency

## Chapter 4: Slavery

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Analyze the role slavery played in the history and economy of the British Empire
- Explain the effects of the 1739 Stono Rebellion and the 1741 New York Conspiracy Trials
- Describe the consumer revolution and its effect on the life of the colonial gentry and other settlers

Slavery formed a cornerstone of the British Empire in the eighteenth century. Every colony had slaves, from the southern rice plantations in Charles Town, South Carolina, to the northern wharves of Boston. Slavery was more than a labor system; it also influenced every aspect of colonial thought and culture. The uneven relationship it engendered gave white colonists an exaggerated sense of their own status. English liberty gained greater meaning and coherence for whites when they contrasted their status to that of the unfree class of black slaves in British America. African slavery provided whites in the colonies with a shared racial bond and identity.

### **SLAVERY AND THE STONO REBELLION**

The transport of slaves to the American colonies accelerated in the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1660, Charles II created the Royal African Company ([\[link\]](#)) to trade in slaves and African goods. His brother, James II, led the company before ascending the throne. Under both these kings, the Royal African Company enjoyed a monopoly to transport slaves to the English colonies. Between 1672 and 1713, the company bought 125,000 captives on the African coast, losing 20 percent of them to death on the Middle Passage, the journey from the African coast to the Americas.



The 1686 English guinea shows the logo of the Royal African Company, an elephant and castle, beneath a bust of King James II. The coins were commonly called guineas because most British gold came from Guinea in West Africa.

The Royal African Company's monopoly ended in 1689 as a result of the Glorious Revolution. After that date, many more English merchants engaged in the slave trade, greatly increasing the number of slaves being transported. Africans who survived the brutal Middle Passage usually arrived in the West Indies, often in Barbados. From there, they were transported to the mainland English colonies on company ships. While merchants in London, Bristol, and Liverpool lined their pockets, Africans trafficked by the company endured a nightmare of misery, privation, and dislocation.

Slaves strove to adapt to their new lives by forming new communities among themselves, often adhering to traditional African customs and healing techniques. Indeed, the development of families and communities formed the most important response to the trauma of being enslaved. Other slaves dealt with the trauma of their situation by actively resisting their condition, whether by defying their masters or running away. Runaway slaves formed what were called "maroon" communities, groups that successfully resisted recapture and formed their own autonomous groups.

The most prominent of these communities lived in the interior of Jamaica, controlling the area and keeping the British away.

Slaves everywhere resisted their exploitation and attempted to gain freedom. They fully understood that rebellions would bring about massive retaliation from whites and therefore had little chance of success. Even so, rebellions occurred frequently. One notable uprising that became known as the Stono Rebellion took place in South Carolina in September 1739. A literate slave named Jemmy led a large group of slaves in an armed insurrection against white colonists, killing several before militia stopped them. The militia suppressed the rebellion after a battle in which both slaves and militiamen were killed, and the remaining slaves were executed or sold to the West Indies.

Jemmy is believed to have been taken from the Kingdom of Kongo, an area where the Portuguese had introduced Catholicism. Other slaves in South Carolina may have had a similar background: Africa-born and familiar with whites. If so, this common background may have made it easier for Jemmy to communicate with the other slaves, enabling them to work together to resist their enslavement even though slaveholders labored to keep slaves from forging such communities.

In the wake of the Stono Rebellion, South Carolina passed a new slave code in 1740 called An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves in the Province, also known as the Negro Act of 1740. This law imposed new limits on slaves' behavior, prohibiting slaves from assembling, growing their own food, learning to write, and traveling freely.

## **THE NEW YORK CONSPIRACY TRIALS OF 1741**

Eighteenth-century New York City contained many different ethnic groups, and conflicts among them created strain. In addition, one in five New Yorkers was a slave, and tensions ran high between slaves and the free population, especially in the aftermath of the Stono Rebellion. These tensions burst forth in 1741.

That year, thirteen fires broke out in the city, one of which reduced the colony's Fort George to ashes. Ever fearful of an uprising among enslaved New Yorkers, the city's whites spread rumors that the fires were part of a massive slave revolt in which slaves would murder whites, burn the city, and take over the colony. The Stono Rebellion was only a few years in the past, and throughout British America, fears of similar incidents were still fresh. Searching for solutions, and convinced slaves were the principal danger, nervous British authorities interrogated almost two hundred slaves and accused them of conspiracy. Rumors that Roman Catholics had joined the suspected conspiracy and planned to murder Protestant inhabitants of the city only added to the general hysteria. Very quickly, two hundred people were arrested, including a large number of the city's slave population.

After a quick series of trials at City Hall, known as the New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741, the government executed seventeen New Yorkers. Thirteen black men were publicly burned at the stake, while the others (including four whites) were hanged ([\[link\]](#)). Seventy slaves were sold to the West Indies. Little evidence exists to prove that an elaborate conspiracy, like the one white New Yorkers imagined, actually existed.



In the wake of a series of  
fires throughout New York  
City, rumors of a slave

revolt led authorities to  
convict and execute thirty  
people, including thirteen  
black men who were  
publicly burned at the  
stake.

The events of 1741 in New York City illustrate the racial divide in British America, where panic among whites spurred great violence against and repression of the feared slave population. In the end, the Conspiracy Trials furthered white dominance and power over enslaved New Yorkers.

**Note:**

View the map of [New York in the 1740s](#) at the New York Public Library's digital gallery, which allows you to zoom in and see specific events. Look closely at numbers 55 and 56 just north of the city limits to see illustrations depicting the executions.

## COLONIAL GENTRY AND THE CONSUMER REVOLUTION

British Americans' reliance on indentured servitude and slavery to meet the demand for colonial labor helped give rise to a wealthy colonial class—the gentry—in the Chesapeake tobacco colonies and elsewhere. To be “genteel,” that is, a member of the gentry, meant to be refined, free of all rudeness. The British American gentry modeled themselves on the English aristocracy, who embodied the ideal of refinement and gentility. They built elaborate mansions to advertise their status and power. William Byrd II of Westover, Virginia, exemplifies the colonial gentry; a wealthy planter and slaveholder, he is known for founding Richmond and for his diaries documenting the life of a gentleman planter ([\[link\]](#)).



This painting by Hans Hysing, ca. 1724, depicts William Byrd II. Byrd was a wealthy gentleman planter in Virginia and a member of the colonial gentry.

**Note:**

**William Byrd's Secret Diary**

The diary of William Byrd, a Virginia planter, provides a unique way to better understand colonial life on a plantation ([\[link\]](#)). What does it show about daily life for a gentleman planter? What does it show about slavery?  
"August 27, 1709

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Josephus. I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance. I had like to have whipped my maid Anaka for her laziness but I forgave her. I read a little geometry. I denied my man G-r-l to go to a horse race



because there was nothing but swearing and drinking there. I ate roast mutton for dinner. In the afternoon I played at piquet with my own wife and made her out of humor by cheating her. I read some Greek in Homer. Then I walked about the plantation. I lent John H-ch £7 [7 English pounds] in his distress. I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

September 6, 1709

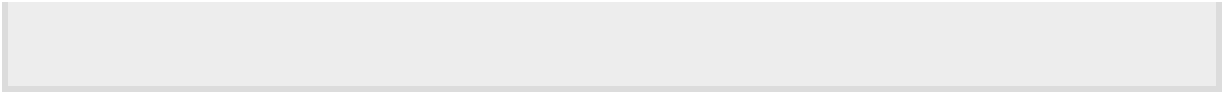
About one o'clock this morning my wife was happily delivered of a son, thanks be to God Almighty. I was awake in a blink and rose and my cousin Harrison met me on the stairs and told me it was a boy. We drank some French wine and went to bed again and rose at 7 o'clock. I read a chapter in Hebrew and then drank chocolate with the women for breakfast. I returned God humble thanks for so great a blessing and recommended my young son to His divine protection. . . .

September 15, 1710

I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Thucydides. I said my prayers and ate milk and pears for breakfast. About 7 o'clock the negro boy [or Betty] that ran away was brought home. My wife against my will caused little Jenny to be burned with a hot iron, for which I quarreled with her. . . ."



This photograph shows the view down the stairway from the third floor of Westover Plantation, home of William Byrd II. What does this image suggest about the lifestyle of the inhabitants—masters and servants—of this house?



One of the ways in which the gentry set themselves apart from others was through their purchase, consumption, and display of goods. An increased supply of consumer goods from England that became available in the eighteenth century led to a phenomenon called the consumer revolution. These products linked the colonies to Great Britain in real and tangible ways. Indeed, along with the colonial gentry, ordinary settlers in the colonies also participated in the frenzy of consumer spending on goods from Great Britain. Tea, for example, came to be regarded as the drink of the Empire, with or without fashionable tea sets.

The consumer revolution also made printed materials more widely available. Before 1680, for instance, no newspapers had been printed in colonial America. In the eighteenth century, however, a flood of journals, books, pamphlets, and other publications became available to readers on both sides of the Atlantic. This shared trove of printed matter linked members of the Empire by creating a community of shared tastes and ideas.

*Cato's Letters*, by Englishmen John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, was one popular series of 144 pamphlets. These Whig circulars were published between 1720 and 1723 and emphasized the glory of England, especially its commitment to liberty. However, the pamphlets cautioned readers to be ever vigilant and on the lookout for attacks upon that liberty. Indeed, *Cato's Letters* suggested that there were constant efforts to undermine and destroy it.

Another very popular publication was the English gentlemen's magazine the *Spectator*, published between 1711 and 1714. In each issue, "Mr. Spectator" observed and commented on the world around him. What made the *Spectator* so wildly popular was its style; the essays were meant to persuade, and to cultivate among readers a refined set of behaviors, rejecting deceit and intolerance and focusing instead on the polishing of genteel taste and manners.

Novels, a new type of literature, made their first appearance in the eighteenth century and proved very popular in the British Atlantic. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* found large and receptive audiences. Reading also allowed female readers the opportunity to interpret what they read without depending on a male authority to tell them what to think. Few women beyond the colonial gentry, however, had access to novels.

## Section Summary

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the expansion of slavery in the American colonies from South Carolina to Boston. The institution of slavery created a false sense of superiority in whites, while simultaneously fueling fears of slave revolt. White response to such revolts, or even the threat of them, led to gross overreactions and further constraints on slaves' activities. The development of the Atlantic economy also allowed colonists access to more British goods than ever before. The buying habits of both commoners and the rising colonial gentry fueled the consumer revolution, creating even stronger ties with Great Britain by means of a shared community of taste and ideas.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** The Negro Act of 1740 was a reaction to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. fears of a slave conspiracy in the setting of thirteen fires in New York City
- B. the Stono Rebellion
- C. the Royal African Company's monopoly
- D. the growing power of maroon communities

---

### Solution:

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What was the “conspiracy” of the New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741?

- A. American patriots conspiring to overthrow the royal government
- B. indentured servants conspiring to overthrow their masters
- C. slaves conspiring to burn down the city and take control
- D. Protestants conspiring to murder Catholics

---

**Solution:**

C

## Chapter 5: Identity during the American Revolution

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain Loyalist and Patriot sentiments
- Identify different groups that participated in the Revolutionary War

The American Revolution in effect created multiple civil wars. Many of the resentments and antagonisms that fed these conflicts predated the Revolution, and the outbreak of war acted as the catalyst they needed to burst forth. In particular, the middle colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania had deeply divided populations. Loyalty to Great Britain came in many forms, from wealthy elites who enjoyed the prewar status quo to runaway slaves who desired the freedom that the British offered.

### LOYALISTS

Historians disagree on what percentage of colonists were Loyalists; estimates range from 20 percent to over 30 percent. In general, however, of British America's population of 2.5 million, roughly one-third remained loyal to Great Britain, while another third committed themselves to the cause of independence. The remaining third remained apathetic, content to continue with their daily lives as best they could and preferring not to engage in the struggle.

Many Loyalists were royal officials and merchants with extensive business ties to Great Britain, who viewed themselves as the rightful and just defenders of the British constitution. Others simply resented local business and political rivals who supported the Revolution, viewing the rebels as hypocrites and schemers who selfishly used the break with the Empire to increase their fortunes. In New York's Hudson Valley, animosity among the tenants of estates owned by Revolutionary leaders turned them to the cause of King and Empire.

During the war, all the states passed **confiscation acts**, which gave the new revolutionary governments in the former colonies the right to seize Loyalist land and property. To ferret out Loyalists, revolutionary governments also passed laws requiring the male population to take oaths of allegiance to the

new states. Those who refused lost their property and were often imprisoned or made to work for the new local revolutionary order.

William Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's only surviving son, remained loyal to Crown and Empire and served as royal governor of New Jersey, a post he secured with his father's help. During the war, revolutionaries imprisoned William in Connecticut; however, he remained steadfast in his allegiance to Great Britain and moved to England after the Revolution. He and his father never reconciled.

As many as nineteen thousand colonists served the British in the effort to put down the rebellion, and after the Revolution, as many as 100,000 colonists left, moving to England or north to Canada rather than staying in the new United States ([\[link\]](#)). Eight thousand whites and five thousand free blacks went to Britain. Over thirty thousand went to Canada, transforming that nation from predominately French to predominantly British. Another sizable group of Loyalists went to the British West Indies, taking their slaves with them.



*The Coming of the*

*Loyalists*, a ca. 1880 work that artist Henry Sandham created at least a century after the Revolution, shows Anglo-American colonists arriving by ship in New Brunswick, Canada.

**Note:**

**Hannah Ingraham on Removing to Nova Scotia**

Hannah Ingraham was eleven years old in 1783, when her Loyalist family removed from New York to Ste. Anne's Point in the colony of Nova Scotia. Later in life, she compiled her memories of that time.

"[Father] said we were to go to Nova Scotia, that a ship was ready to take us there, so we made all haste to get ready. . . . Then on Tuesday, suddenly the house was surrounded by rebels and father was taken prisoner and carried away. . . . When morning came, they said he was free to go.

We had five wagon loads carried down the Hudson in a sloop and then we went on board the transport that was to bring us to Saint John. I was just eleven years old when we left our farm to come here. It was the last transport of the season and had on board all those who could not come sooner. The first transports had come in May so the people had all the summer before them to get settled. . . .

We lived in a tent at St. Anne's until father got a house ready. . . . There was no floor laid, no windows, no chimney, no door, but we had a roof at least. A good fire was blazing and mother had a big loaf of bread and she boiled a kettle of water and put a good piece of butter in a pewter bowl. We toasted the bread and all sat around the bowl and ate our breakfast that morning and mother said: "Thank God we are no longer in dread of having shots fired through our house. This is the sweetest meal I ever tasted for many a day."

What do these excerpts tell you about life as a Loyalist in New York or as a transplant to Canada?

## SLAVES AND INDIANS

While some slaves who fought for the Patriot cause received their freedom, revolutionary leaders—unlike the British—did not grant such slaves their freedom as a matter of course. Washington, the owner of more than two hundred slaves during the Revolution, refused to let slaves serve in the army, although he did allow free blacks. (In his will, Washington did free his slaves.) In the new United States, the Revolution largely reinforced a racial identity based on skin color. Whiteness, now a national identity, denoted freedom and stood as the key to power. Blackness, more than ever before, denoted servile status. Indeed, despite their class and ethnic differences, white revolutionaries stood mostly united in their hostility to both blacks and Indians.

### **Note:**

#### **Boyrereau Brinch and Boston King on the Revolutionary War**

In the Revolutionary War, some blacks, both free and enslaved, chose to fight for the Americans ([\[link\]](#)). Others chose to fight for the British, who offered them freedom for joining their cause. Read the excerpts below for the perspective of a black veteran from each side of the conflict.



Jean-Baptiste-Antoine de Verger created this 1781 watercolor, which depicts American soldiers at the Siege of Yorktown. Verger was an officer in



Rochambeau's army, and his diary holds firsthand accounts of his experiences in the campaigns of 1780 and 1781. This image contains one of the earliest known representations of a black Continental soldier.

Boyrereau Brinch was captured in Africa at age sixteen and brought to America as a slave. He joined the Patriot forces and was honorably discharged and emancipated after the war. He told his story to Benjamin Prentiss, who published it as *The Blind African Slave* in 1810.

"Finally, I was in the battles at Cambridge, White Plains, Monmouth, Princeton, Newark, Frog's Point, Horseneck where I had a ball pass through my knapsack. All which battels [sic] the reader can obtain a more perfect account of in history, than I can give. At last we returned to West Point and were discharged [1783], as the war was over. Thus was I, a slave for five years fighting for liberty. After we were disbanded, I returned to my old master at Woodbury [Connecticut], with whom I lived one year, my services in the American war, having emancipated me from further slavery, and from being bartered or sold. . . . Here I enjoyed the pleasures of a freeman; my food was sweet, my labor pleasure: and one bright gleam of life seemed to shine upon me."

Boston King was a Charleston-born slave who escaped his master and joined the Loyalists. He made his way to Nova Scotia and later Sierra Leone, where he published his memoirs in 1792. The excerpt below describes his experience in New York after the war.

"When I arrived at New-York, my friends rejoiced to see me once more restored to liberty, and joined me in praising the Lord for his mercy and goodness. . . . [In 1783] the horrors and devastation of war happily terminated, and peace was restored between America and Great Britain, which diffused universal joy among all parties, except us, who had escaped from slavery and taken refuge in the English army; for a report prevailed at New-York, that all the slaves, in number 2000, were to be delivered up to their masters, altho' some of them had been three or four years among the English. This dreadful rumour filled us all with inexpressible anguish and terror, especially when we saw our old masters coming from Virginia,

North-Carolina, and other parts, and seizing upon their slaves in the streets of New-York, or even dragging them out of their beds. Many of the slaves had very cruel masters, so that the thoughts of returning home with them embittered life to us. For some days we lost our appetite for food, and sleep departed from our eyes. The English had compassion upon us in the day of distress, and issued out a Proclamation, importing, That all slaves should be free, who had taken refuge in the British lines, and claimed the sanction and privileges of the Proclamations respecting the security and protection of Negroes. In consequence of this, each of us received a certificate from the commanding officer at New-York, which dispelled all our fears, and filled us with joy and gratitude."

What do these two narratives have in common, and how are they different? How do the two men describe freedom?

For slaves willing to run away and join the British, the American Revolution offered a unique occasion to escape bondage. Of the half a million slaves in the American colonies during the Revolution, twenty thousand joined the British cause. At Yorktown, for instance, thousands of black troops fought with Lord Cornwallis. Slaves belonging to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and other revolutionaries seized the opportunity for freedom and fled to the British side. Between ten and twenty thousand slaves gained their freedom because of the Revolution; arguably, the Revolution created the largest slave uprising and the greatest emancipation until the Civil War. After the Revolution, some of these African Loyalists emigrated to Sierra Leone on the west coast of Africa. Others removed to Canada and England. It is also true that people of color made heroic contributions to the cause of American independence. However, while the British offered slaves freedom, most American revolutionaries clung to notions of black inferiority.

Powerful Indian peoples who had allied themselves with the British, including the Mohawk and the Creek, also remained loyal to the Empire. A Mohawk named Joseph Brant, whose given name was Thayendanegea ([link](#)), rose to prominence while fighting for the British during the Revolution. He joined forces with Colonel Barry St. Leger during the 1777

campaign, which ended with the surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga. After the war, Brant moved to the Six Nations reserve in Canada. From his home on the shores of Lake Ontario, he remained active in efforts to restrict white encroachment onto Indian lands. After their defeat, the British did not keep promises they'd made to help their Indian allies keep their territory; in fact, the Treaty of Paris granted the United States huge amounts of supposedly British-owned regions that were actually Indian lands.



(a)



(b)

What similarities can you see in these two portraits of Joseph Brant, one by Gilbert Stuart in 1786 (a) and one by Charles Wilson Peale in 1797 (b)? What are the differences? Why do you think the artists made the specific choices they did?

## PATRIOTS

The American revolutionaries (also called Patriots or Whigs) came from many different backgrounds and included merchants, shoemakers, farmers, and sailors. What is extraordinary is the way in which the struggle for independence brought a vast cross-section of society together, animated by a common cause.

During the war, the revolutionaries faced great difficulties, including massive supply problems; clothing, ammunition, tents, and equipment were all hard to come by. After an initial burst of enthusiasm in 1775 and 1776, the shortage of supplies became acute in 1777 through 1779, as Washington's difficult winter at Valley Forge demonstrates.

Funding the war effort also proved very difficult. Whereas the British could pay in gold and silver, the American forces relied on paper money, backed by loans obtained in Europe. This first American money was called **Continental currency**; unfortunately, it quickly fell in value. "Not worth a Continental" soon became a shorthand term for something of no value. The new revolutionary government printed a great amount of this paper money, resulting in runaway inflation. By 1781, inflation was such that 146 Continental dollars were worth only one dollar in gold. The problem grew worse as each former colony, now a revolutionary state, printed its own currency.

## WOMEN

In colonial America, women shouldered enormous domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. The war for independence only increased their workload and, in some ways, solidified their roles. Rebel leaders required women to produce articles for war—everything from clothing to foodstuffs—while also keeping their homesteads going. This was not an easy task when their husbands and sons were away fighting. Women were also expected to provide food and lodging for armies and to nurse wounded soldiers.

The Revolution opened some new doors for women, however, as they took on public roles usually reserved for men. The Daughters of Liberty, an informal organization formed in the mid-1760s to oppose British revenue-

raising measures, worked tirelessly to support the war effort. Esther DeBerdt Reed of Philadelphia, wife of Governor Joseph Reed, formed the Ladies Association of Philadelphia and led a fundraising drive to provide sorely needed supplies to the Continental Army. In “The Sentiments of an American Woman” (1780), she wrote to other women, “The time is arrived to display the same sentiments which animated us at the beginning of the Revolution, when we renounced the use of teas, however agreeable to our taste, rather than receive them from our persecutors; when we made it appear to them that we placed former necessities in the rank of superfluities, when our liberty was interested; when our republican and laborious hands spun the flax, prepared the linen intended for the use of our soldiers; when exiles and fugitives we supported with courage all the evils which are the concomitants of war.” Reed and other elite women in Philadelphia raised almost \$300,000 in Continental money for the war.

**Note:**

Read the entire text of Esther Reed’s [“The Sentiments of an American Woman”](#) on a page hosted by the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Women who did not share Reed’s elite status nevertheless played key economic roles by producing homespun cloth and food. During shortages, some women formed mobs and wrested supplies from those who hoarded them. Crowds of women beset merchants and demanded fair prices for goods; if a merchant refused, a riot would ensue. Still other women accompanied the army as “camp followers,” serving as cooks, washerwomen, and nurses. A few also took part in combat and proved their equality with men through violence against the hated British.

## Section Summary

The American Revolution divided the colonists as much as it united them, with Loyalists (or Tories) joining the British forces against the Patriots (or revolutionaries). Both sides included a broad cross-section of the

population. However, Great Britain was able to convince many slaves to join its forces by promising them freedom, something the southern revolutionaries would not agree to do. The war provided new opportunities, as well as new challenges, for slaves, free blacks, women, and Indians. After the war, many Loyalists fled the American colonies, heading across the Atlantic to England, north to Canada, or south to the West Indies.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following statements best represents the division between Patriots and Loyalists?

- A. Most American colonists were Patriots, with only a few traditionalists remaining loyal to the King and Empire.
- B. Most American colonists were Loyalists, with only a few firebrand revolutionaries leading the charge for independence.
- C. American colonists were divided among those who wanted independence, those who wanted to remain part of the British Empire, and those who were neutral.
- D. The vast majority of American colonists were neutral and didn't take a side between Loyalists and Patriots.

---

#### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following is *not* one of the tasks women performed during the Revolution?

- A. holding government offices

- B. maintaining their homesteads
  - C. feeding, quartering, and nursing soldiers
  - D. raising funds for the war effort
- 

**Solution:**

A

## Critical Thinking Questions

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

How did the colonists manage to triumph in their battle for independence despite Great Britain's military might? If any of these factors had been different, how might it have affected the outcome of the war?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

How did the condition of certain groups, such as women, blacks, and Indians, reveal a contradiction in the Declaration of Independence?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What was the effect and importance of Great Britain's promise of freedom to slaves who joined the British side?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

How did the Revolutionary War provide both new opportunities and new challenges for slaves and free blacks in America?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Describe the ideology of republicanism. As a political philosophy, how did republicanism compare to the system that prevailed in Great Britain?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Describe the backgrounds and philosophies of Patriots and Loyalists. Why did colonists with such diverse individual interests unite in support of their respective causes? What might different groups of Patriots and Loyalists, depending upon their circumstances, have hoped to achieve by winning the war?

**Glossary**

confiscation acts

state-wide acts that made it legal for state governments to seize Loyalists' property

Continental currency

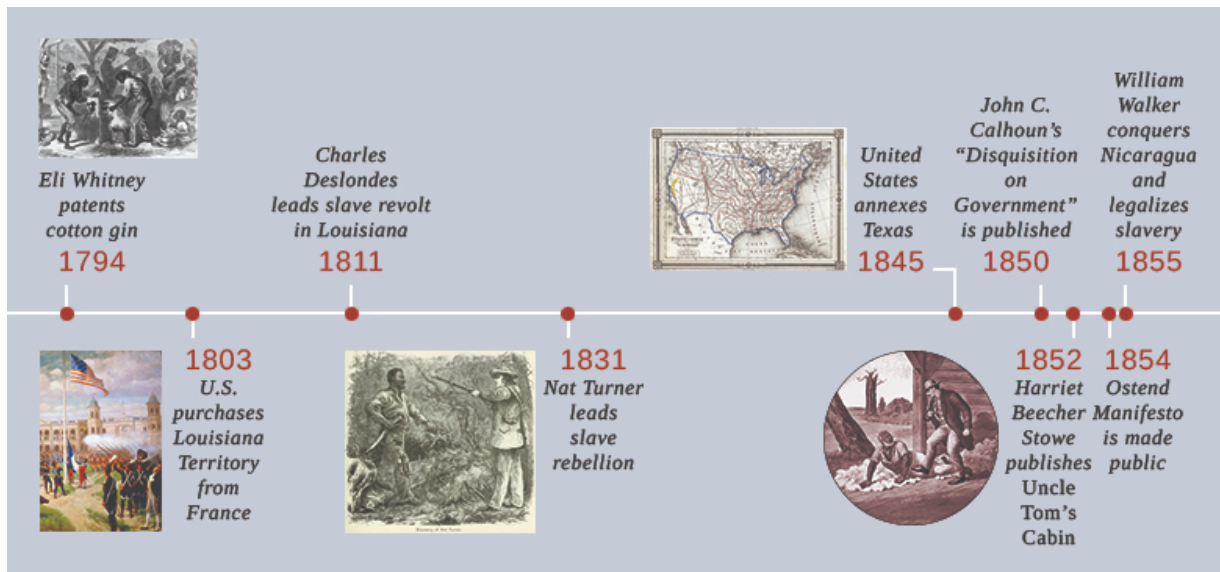
the paper currency that the Continental government printed to fund the Revolution



## Chapter 6: Economics of Cotton

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the labor-intensive processes of cotton production
- Describe the importance of cotton to the Atlantic and American antebellum economy



In the **antebellum** era—that is, in the years before the Civil War—American planters in the South continued to grow Chesapeake tobacco and Carolina rice as they had in the colonial era. Cotton, however, emerged as the antebellum South's major commercial crop, eclipsing tobacco, rice, and sugar in economic importance. By 1860, the region was producing two-thirds of the world's cotton. In 1793, Eli Whitney revolutionized the production of cotton when he invented the **cotton gin**, a device that separated the seeds from raw cotton. Suddenly, a process that was extraordinarily labor-intensive when done by hand could be completed quickly and easily. American plantation owners, who were searching for a successful staple crop to compete on the world market, found it in cotton.

As a commodity, cotton had the advantage of being easily stored and transported. A demand for it already existed in the industrial textile mills in Great Britain, and in time, a steady stream of slave-grown American cotton would also supply northern textile mills. Southern cotton, picked and

processed by American slaves, helped fuel the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution in both the United States and Great Britain.

## KING COTTON

Almost no cotton was grown in the United States in 1787, the year the federal constitution was written. However, following the War of 1812, a huge increase in production resulted in the so-called **cotton boom**, and by midcentury, cotton became the key **cash crop** (a crop grown to sell rather than for the farmer's sole use) of the southern economy and the most important American commodity. By 1850, of the 3.2 million slaves in the country's fifteen slave states, 1.8 million were producing cotton; by 1860, slave labor was producing over two billion pounds of cotton per year. Indeed, American cotton soon made up two-thirds of the global supply, and production continued to soar. By the time of the Civil War, South Carolina politician James Hammond confidently proclaimed that the North could never threaten the South because "cotton is king."

The crop grown in the South was a hybrid: *Gossypium barbadense*, known as Petit Gulf cotton, a mix of Mexican, Georgia, and Siamese strains. Petit Gulf cotton grew extremely well in different soils and climates. It dominated cotton production in the Mississippi River Valley—home of the new slave states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri—as well as in other states like Texas. Whenever new slave states entered the Union, white slaveholders sent armies of slaves to clear the land in order to grow and pick the lucrative crop. The phrase "to be sold down the river," used by Harriet Beecher Stowe in her 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, refers to this forced migration from the upper southern states to the Deep South, lower on the Mississippi, to grow cotton.

The slaves who built this cotton kingdom with their labor started by clearing the land. Although the Jeffersonian vision of the settlement of new U.S. territories entailed white yeoman farmers single-handedly carving out small independent farms, the reality proved quite different. Entire old-growth forests and cypress swamps fell to the axe as slaves labored to strip the vegetation to make way for cotton. With the land cleared, slaves readied the earth by plowing and planting. To ambitious white planters, the extent

of new land available for cotton production seemed almost limitless, and many planters simply leapfrogged from one area to the next, abandoning their fields every ten to fifteen years after the soil became exhausted. There was a world of mobility and restlessness, a constant search for the next area to grow the valuable crop. Slaves composed the vanguard of this American expansion to the West.

Cotton planting took place in March and April, when slaves planted seeds in rows around three to five feet apart. Over the next several months, from April to August, they carefully tended the plants. Weeding the cotton rows took significant energy and time. In August, after the cotton plants had flowered and the flowers had begun to give way to cotton bolls (the seed-bearing capsule that contains the cotton fiber), all the plantation's slaves—men, women, and children—worked together to pick the crop ([link](#)). On each day of cotton picking, slaves went to the fields with sacks, which they would fill as many times as they could. The effort was laborious, and a white “driver” employed the lash to make slaves work as quickly as possible.



In the late nineteenth century, J. N. Wilson

captured this image of  
harvest time at a southern  
plantation. While the  
workers in this photograph  
are not slave laborers, the  
process of cotton  
harvesting shown here had  
changed little from  
antebellum times.

Cotton planters projected the amount of cotton they could harvest based on the number of slaves under their control. In general, planters expected a good “hand,” or slave, to work ten acres of land and pick two hundred pounds of cotton a day. An overseer or master measured each individual slave’s daily yield. Great pressure existed to meet the expected daily amount, and some masters whipped slaves who picked less than expected.

Cotton picking occurred as many as seven times a season as the plant grew and continued to produce bolls through the fall and early winter. During the picking season, slaves worked from sunrise to sunset with a ten-minute break at lunch; many slaveholders tended to give them little to eat, since spending on food would cut into their profits. Other slaveholders knew that feeding slaves could increase productivity and therefore provided what they thought would help ensure a profitable crop. The slaves’ day didn’t end after they picked the cotton; once they had brought it to the gin house to be weighed, they then had to care for the animals and perform other chores. Indeed, slaves often maintained their own gardens and livestock, which they tended after working the cotton fields, in order to supplement their supply of food.

Sometimes the cotton was dried before it was ginned (put through the process of separating the seeds from the cotton fiber). The cotton gin allowed a slave to remove the seeds from fifty pounds of cotton a day, compared to one pound if done by hand. After the seeds had been removed, the cotton was pressed into bales. These bales, weighing about four hundred

to five hundred pounds, were wrapped in burlap cloth and sent down the Mississippi River.

**Note:**

Visit the [Internet Archive](#) to watch a 1937 WPA film showing cotton bales being loaded onto a steamboat.

As the cotton industry boomed in the South, the Mississippi River quickly became the essential water highway in the United States. Steamboats, a crucial part of the transportation revolution thanks to their enormous freight-carrying capacity and ability to navigate shallow waterways, became a defining component of the cotton kingdom. Steamboats also illustrated the class and social distinctions of the antebellum age. While the decks carried precious cargo, ornate rooms graced the interior. In these spaces, whites socialized in the ship's saloons and dining halls while black slaves served them ([link](#)).



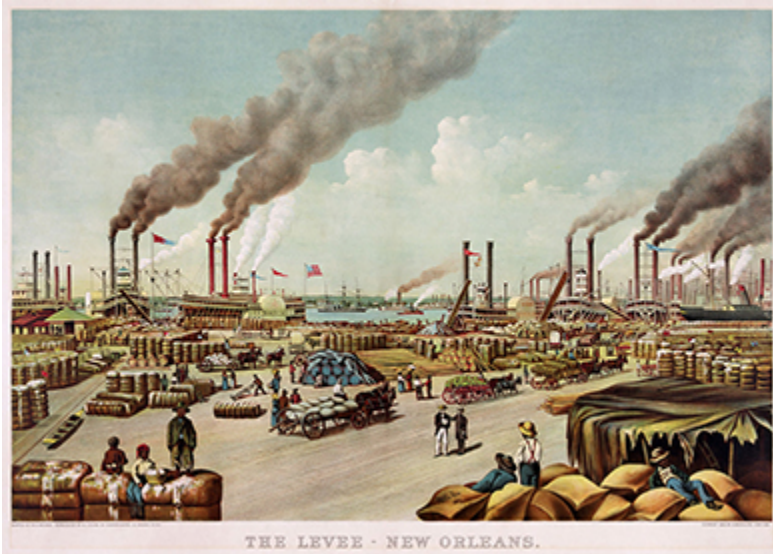
As in this depiction of the saloon of the

Mississippi River steamboat *Princess*,  
elegant and luxurious rooms often  
occupied the interiors of antebellum  
steamships, whose decks were filled with  
cargo.

Investors poured huge sums into steamships. In 1817, only seventeen plied the waters of western rivers, but by 1837, there were over seven hundred steamships in operation. Major new ports developed at St. Louis, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; and other locations. By 1860, some thirty-five hundred vessels were steaming in and out of New Orleans, carrying an annual cargo made up primarily of cotton that amounted to \$220 million worth of goods (approximately \$6.5 billion in 2014 dollars).

New Orleans had been part of the French empire before the United States purchased it, along with the rest of the Louisiana Territory, in 1803. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it rose in prominence and importance largely because of the cotton boom, steam-powered river traffic, and its strategic position near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Steamboats moved down the river transporting cotton grown on plantations along the river and throughout the South to the port at New Orleans. From there, the bulk of American cotton went to Liverpool, England, where it was sold to British manufacturers who ran the cotton mills in Manchester and elsewhere. This lucrative international trade brought new wealth and new residents to the city. By 1840, New Orleans alone had 12 percent of the nation's total banking capital, and visitors often commented on the great cultural diversity of the city. In 1835, Joseph Holt Ingraham wrote: "Truly does New-Orleans represent every other city and nation upon earth. I know of none where is congregated so great a variety of the human species." Slaves, cotton, and the steamship transformed the city from a relatively isolated corner of North America in the eighteenth century to a thriving metropolis that rivaled New York in importance ([link](#)).





This print of *The Levee - New Orleans* (1884) shows the bustling port of New Orleans with bales of cotton waiting to be shipped. The sheer volume of cotton indicates its economic importance throughout the century.

## THE DOMESTIC SLAVE TRADE

The South's dependence on cotton was matched by its dependence on slaves to harvest the cotton. Despite the rhetoric of the Revolution that "all men are created equal," slavery not only endured in the American republic but formed the very foundation of the country's economic success. Cotton and slavery occupied a central—and intertwined—place in the nineteenth-century economy.

In 1807, the U.S. Congress abolished the foreign slave trade, a ban that went into effect on January 1, 1808. After this date, importing slaves from Africa became illegal in the United States. While smuggling continued to occur, the end of the international slave trade meant that domestic slaves were in very high demand. Fortunately for Americans whose wealth depended upon the exploitation of slave labor, a fall in the price of tobacco

had caused landowners in the Upper South to reduce their production of this crop and use more of their land to grow wheat, which was far more profitable. While tobacco was a labor-intensive crop that required many people to cultivate it, wheat was not. Former tobacco farmers in the older states of Virginia and Maryland found themselves with “surplus” slaves whom they were obligated to feed, clothe, and shelter. Some slaveholders responded to this situation by freeing slaves; far more decided to sell their excess bondsmen. Virginia and Maryland therefore took the lead in the **domestic slave trade**, the trading of slaves within the borders of the United States.

The domestic slave trade offered many economic opportunities for white men. Those who sold their slaves could realize great profits, as could the slave brokers who served as middlemen between sellers and buyers. Other white men could benefit from the trade as owners of warehouses and pens in which slaves were held, or as suppliers of clothing and food for slaves on the move. Between 1790 and 1859, slaveholders in Virginia sold more than half a million slaves. In the early part of this period, many of these slaves were sold to people living in Kentucky, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina. By the 1820s, however, people in Kentucky and the Carolinas had begun to sell many of their slaves as well. Maryland slave dealers sold at least 185,000 slaves. Kentucky slaveholders sold some seventy-one thousand individuals. Most of the slave traders carried these slaves further south to Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. New Orleans, the hub of commerce, boasted the largest slave market in the United States and grew to become the nation’s fourth-largest city as a result. Natchez, Mississippi, had the second-largest market. In Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and elsewhere in the South, slave auctions happened every day.

All told, the movement of slaves in the South made up one of the largest forced internal migrations in the United States. In each of the decades between 1820 and 1860, about 200,000 people were sold and relocated. The 1800 census recorded over one million African Americans, of which nearly 900,000 were slaves. By 1860, the total number of African Americans increased to 4.4 million, and of that number, 3.95 million were held in bondage. For many slaves, the domestic slave trade incited the terror of being sold away from family and friends.



**Note:****Solomon Northup Remembers the New Orleans Slave Market**

Solomon Northup was a free black man living in Saratoga, New York, when he was kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1841. He later escaped and wrote a book about his experiences: *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and Rescued in 1853* (the basis of a 2013 Academy Award–winning film). This excerpt derives from Northup’s description of being sold in New Orleans, along with fellow slave Eliza and her children Randall and Emily.

"One old gentleman, who said he wanted a coachman, appeared to take a fancy to me. . . .

The same man also purchased Randall. The little fellow was made to jump, and run across the floor, and perform many other feats, exhibiting his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on, Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She besought the man not to buy him, unless he also bought her self and Emily. . . . Freeman turned round to her, savagely, with his whip in his uplifted hand, ordering her to stop her noise, or he would flog her. He would not have such work—such snivelling; and unless she ceased that minute, he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. . . . Eliza shrunk before him, and tried to wipe away her tears, but it was all in vain. She wanted to be with her children, she said, the little time she had to live. All the frowns and threats of Freeman, could not wholly silence the afflicted mother."

What does Northup’s narrative tell you about the experience of being a slave? How does he characterize Freeman, the slave trader? How does he characterize Eliza?

## **THE SOUTH IN THE AMERICAN AND WORLD MARKETS**

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a market revolution in the United States, one in which industrialization brought changes to both the production and the consumption of goods. Some southerners of the time believed that their region’s reliance on a single cash crop and its use of

slaves to produce it gave the South economic independence and made it immune from the effects of these changes, but this was far from the truth. Indeed, the production of cotton brought the South more firmly into the larger American and Atlantic markets. Northern mills depended on the South for supplies of raw cotton that was then converted into textiles. But this domestic cotton market paled in comparison to the Atlantic market. About 75 percent of the cotton produced in the United States was eventually exported abroad. Exporting at such high volumes made the United States the undisputed world leader in cotton production. Between the years 1820 and 1860, approximately 80 percent of the global cotton supply was produced in the United States. Nearly all the exported cotton was shipped to Great Britain, fueling its burgeoning textile industry and making the powerful British Empire increasingly dependent on American cotton and southern slavery.

The power of cotton on the world market may have brought wealth to the South, but it also increased its economic dependence on other countries and other parts of the United States. Much of the corn and pork that slaves consumed came from farms in the West. Some of the inexpensive clothing, called “slops,” and shoes worn by slaves were manufactured in the North. The North also supplied the furnishings found in the homes of both wealthy planters and members of the middle class. Many of the trappings of domestic life, such as carpets, lamps, dinnerware, upholstered furniture, books, and musical instruments—all the accoutrements of comfortable living for southern whites—were made in either the North or Europe. Southern planters also borrowed money from banks in northern cities, and in the southern summers, took advantage of the developments in transportation to travel to resorts at Saratoga, New York; Litchfield, Connecticut; and Newport, Rhode Island.

## **Section Summary**

In the years before the Civil War, the South produced the bulk of the world’s supply of cotton. The Mississippi River Valley slave states became the epicenter of cotton production, an area of frantic economic activity where the landscape changed dramatically as land was transformed from pinewoods and swamps into cotton fields. Cotton’s profitability relied on

the institution of slavery, which generated the product that fueled cotton mill profits in the North. When the international slave trade was outlawed in 1808, the domestic slave trade exploded, providing economic opportunities for whites involved in many aspects of the trade and increasing the possibility of slaves' dislocation and separation from kin and friends. Although the larger American and Atlantic markets relied on southern cotton in this era, the South depended on these other markets for food, manufactured goods, and loans. Thus, the market revolution transformed the South just as it had other regions.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following was *not* one of the effects of the cotton boom?

- A. U.S. trade increased with France and Spain.
- B. Northern manufacturing expanded.
- C. The need for slave labor grew.
- D. Port cities like New Orleans expanded.

---

#### Solution:

A

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

The abolition of the foreign slave trade in 1807 led to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a dramatic decrease in the price and demand for slaves
- B. the rise of a thriving domestic slave trade
- C. a reform movement calling for the complete end to slavery in the United States
- D. the decline of cotton production

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Why did some southerners believe their region was immune to the effects of the market revolution? Why was this thinking misguided?

---

**Solution:**

Some southerners believed that their region's monopoly over the lucrative cotton crop—on which both the larger American and Atlantic markets depended—and their possession of a slave labor force allowed the South to remain independent from the market revolution. However, the very cotton that provided the South with such economic potency also increased its reliance on the larger U.S. and world markets, which supplied—among other things—the food and clothes slaves needed, the furniture and other manufactured goods that defined the southern standard of comfortable living, and the banks from which southerners borrowed needed funds.

**Glossary****antebellum**

a term meaning “before the war” and used to describe the decades before the American Civil War began in 1861

**cash crop**

a crop grown to be sold for profit instead of consumption by the farmer's family

**cotton boom**

the upswing in American cotton production during the nineteenth century

cotton gin

a device, patented by Eli Whitney in 1794, that separated the seeds from raw cotton quickly and easily

domestic slave trade

the trading of slaves within the borders of the United States

## Chapter 7: African Americans in the Antebellum United States

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the similarities and differences in the lives of slaves and free blacks
- Describe the independent culture and customs that slaves developed

In addition to cotton, the great commodity of the antebellum South was human chattel. Slavery was the cornerstone of the southern economy. By 1850, about 3.2 million slaves labored in the United States, 1.8 million of whom worked in the cotton fields. Slaves faced arbitrary power abuses from whites; they coped by creating family and community networks. Storytelling, song, and Christianity also provided solace and allowed slaves to develop their own interpretations of their condition.

### LIFE AS A SLAVE

Southern whites frequently relied upon the idea of **paternalism**—the premise that white slaveholders acted in the best interests of slaves, taking responsibility for their care, feeding, discipline, and even their Christian morality—to justify the existence of slavery. This grossly misrepresented the reality of slavery, which was, by any measure, a dehumanizing, traumatizing, and horrifying human disaster and crime against humanity. Nevertheless, slaves were hardly passive victims of their conditions; they sought and found myriad ways to resist their shackles and develop their own communities and cultures.

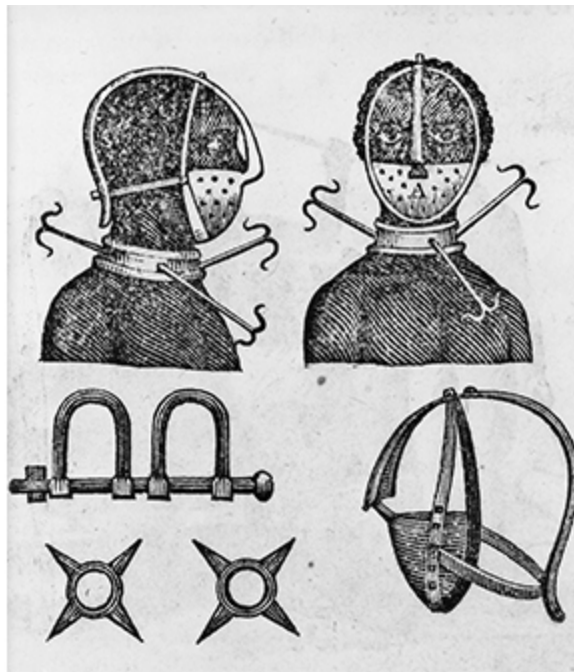
Slaves often used the notion of paternalism to their advantage, finding opportunities within this system to engage in acts of resistance and win a degree of freedom and autonomy. For example, some slaves played into their masters' racism by hiding their intelligence and feigning childishness and ignorance. The slaves could then slow down the workday and sabotage the system in small ways by “accidentally” breaking tools, for example; the master, seeing his slaves as unsophisticated and childlike, would believe these incidents were accidents rather than rebellions. Some slaves engaged in more dramatic forms of resistance, such as poisoning their masters slowly. Other slaves reported rebellious slaves to their masters, hoping to

gain preferential treatment. Slaves who informed their masters about planned slave rebellions could often expect the slaveholder's gratitude and, perhaps, more lenient treatment. Such expectations were always tempered by the individual personality and caprice of the master.

Slaveholders used both psychological coercion and physical violence to prevent slaves from disobeying their wishes. Often, the most efficient way to discipline slaves was to threaten to sell them. The lash, while the most common form of punishment, was effective but not efficient; whippings sometimes left slaves incapacitated or even dead. Slave masters also used punishment gear like neck braces, balls and chains, leg irons, and paddles with holes to produce blood blisters. Slaves lived in constant terror of both physical violence and separation from family and friends ([\[link\]](#)).



(a)



(b)

The original caption of this photograph of a slave's scarred back (a), taken in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1863, reads as follows: *"Overseer Artayou Carrier whipped me. I was two months in bed sore from the whipping. My master come after I was whipped; he discharged the overseer. The very*

*words of poor Peter, taken as he sat for his picture.”*

Images like this one helped bolster the northern abolitionist message of the inhumanity of slavery. The drawing of an iron mask, collar, leg shackles, and spurs (b) demonstrates the various cruel and painful instruments used to restrain slaves.

Under southern law, slaves could not marry. Nonetheless, some slaveholders allowed marriages to promote the birth of children and to foster harmony on plantations. Some masters even forced certain slaves to form unions, anticipating the birth of more children (and consequently greater profits) from them. Masters sometimes allowed slaves to choose their own partners, but they could also veto a match. Slave couples always faced the prospect of being sold away from each other, and, once they had children, the horrifying reality that their children could be sold and sent away at any time.

**Note:**

Browse a collection of first-hand narratives of slaves and former slaves at the [National Humanities Center](#) to learn more about the experience of slavery.

Slave parents had to show their children the best way to survive under slavery. This meant teaching them to be discreet, submissive, and guarded around whites. Parents also taught their children through the stories they told. Popular stories among slaves included tales of tricksters, sly slaves, or animals like **Brer Rabbit**, who outwitted their antagonists ([\[link\]](#)). Such stories provided comfort in humor and conveyed the slaves’ sense of the wrongs of slavery. Slaves’ work songs commented on the harshness of their life and often had double meanings—a literal meaning that whites would not find offensive and a deeper meaning for slaves.





Brer Rabbit, depicted here  
in an illustration from  
*Uncle Remus, His Songs  
and His Sayings: The Folk-  
Lore of the Old Plantation*  
(1881) by Joel Chandler  
Harris, was a trickster who  
outwitted his opponents.

African beliefs, including ideas about the spiritual world and the importance of African healers, survived in the South as well. Whites who became aware of non-Christian rituals among slaves labeled such practices as witchcraft. Among Africans, however, the rituals and use of various plants by respected slave healers created connections between the African past and the American South while also providing a sense of community and identity for slaves. Other African customs, including traditional naming patterns, the making of baskets, and the cultivation of certain native African plants that had been brought to the New World, also endured.

**Note:**

## African Americans and Christian Spirituals

Many slaves embraced Christianity. Their masters emphasized a scriptural message of obedience to whites and a better day awaiting slaves in heaven, but slaves focused on the uplifting message of being freed from bondage. The styles of worship in the Methodist and Baptist churches, which emphasized emotional responses to scripture, attracted slaves to those traditions and inspired some to become preachers. Spiritual songs that referenced the Exodus (the biblical account of the Hebrews' escape from slavery in Egypt), such as "Roll, Jordan, Roll," allowed slaves to freely express messages of hope, struggle, and overcoming adversity ([link](#)).



This version of "Roll, Jordan, Roll" was included in *Slave Songs of the United States*, the first published collection of African American music, which appeared in 1867.

What imagery might the Jordan River suggest to slaves working in the Deep South? What lyrics in this song suggest redemption and a better world ahead?

**Note:**

Listen to a rendition of [“Roll, Jordan, Roll”](#) from the movie based on Solomon Northup’s memoir and life.

## THE FREE BLACK POPULATION

Complicating the picture of the antebellum South was the existence of a large free black population. In fact, more free blacks lived in the South than in the North; roughly 261,000 lived in slave states, while 226,000 lived in northern states without slavery. Most free blacks did not live in the Lower, or Deep South: the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. Instead, the largest number lived in the upper southern states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and later Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia.

Part of the reason for the large number of free blacks living in slave states were the many instances of manumission—the formal granting of freedom to slaves—that occurred as a result of the Revolution, when many slaveholders put into action the ideal that “all men are created equal” and freed their slaves. The transition in the Upper South to the staple crop of wheat, which did not require large numbers of slaves to produce, also spurred manumissions. Another large group of free blacks in the South had been free residents of Louisiana before the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, while still other free blacks came from Cuba and Haiti.

Most free blacks in the South lived in cities, and a majority of free blacks were lighter-skinned women, a reflection of the interracial unions that formed between white men and black women. Everywhere in the United States blackness had come to be associated with slavery, the station at the bottom of the social ladder. Both whites and those with African ancestry tended to delineate varying degrees of lightness in skin color in a social hierarchy. In the slaveholding South, different names described one’s distance from blackness or whiteness: mulattos (those with one black and one white parent), quadroons (those with one black grandparent), and octoroons (those with one black great-grandparent) ([link](#)). Lighter-skinned

blacks often looked down on their darker counterparts, an indication of the ways in which both whites and blacks internalized the racism of the age.



In this late eighteenth-century painting, a free woman of color stands with her quadroon daughter in New Orleans. Families with members that had widely varying ethnic characteristics were not uncommon at the time, especially in the larger cities.

Some free blacks in the South owned slaves of their own. Andrew Durnford, for example, was born in New Orleans in 1800, three years before the Louisiana Purchase. His father was white, and his mother was a free black. Durnford became an American citizen after the Louisiana

Purchase, rising to prominence as a Louisiana sugar planter and slaveholder. William Ellison, another free black who amassed great wealth and power in the South, was born a slave in 1790 in South Carolina. After buying his freedom and that of his wife and daughter, he proceeded to purchase his own slaves, whom he then put to work manufacturing cotton gins. By the eve of the Civil War, Ellison had become one of the richest and largest slaveholders in the entire state.

The phenomenon of free blacks amassing large fortunes within a slave society predicated on racial difference, however, was exceedingly rare. Most free blacks in the South lived under the specter of slavery and faced many obstacles. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, southern states increasingly made manumission of slaves illegal. They also devised laws that divested free blacks of their rights, such as the right to testify against whites in court or the right to seek employment where they pleased. Interestingly, it was in the upper southern states that such laws were the harshest. In Virginia, for example, legislators made efforts to require free blacks to leave the state. In parts of the Deep South, free blacks were able to maintain their rights more easily. The difference in treatment between free blacks in the Deep South and those in the Upper South, historians have surmised, came down to economics. In the Deep South, slavery as an institution was strong and profitable. In the Upper South, the opposite was true. The anxiety of this economic uncertainty manifested in the form of harsh laws that targeted free blacks.

## **SLAVE REVOLTS**

Slaves resisted their enslavement in small ways every day, but this resistance did not usually translate into mass uprisings. Slaves understood that the chances of ending slavery through rebellion were slim and would likely result in massive retaliation; many also feared the risk that participating in such actions would pose to themselves and their families. White slaveholders, however, constantly feared uprisings and took drastic steps, including torture and mutilation, whenever they believed that rebellions might be simmering. Gripped by the fear of insurrection, whites often imagined revolts to be in the works even when no uprising actually happened.

At least two major slave uprisings did occur in the antebellum South. In 1811, a major rebellion broke out in the sugar parishes of the booming territory of Louisiana. Inspired by the successful overthrow of the white planter class in Haiti, Louisiana slaves took up arms against planters. Perhaps as many five hundred slaves joined the rebellion, led by Charles Deslondes, a mixed-race slave driver on a sugar plantation owned by Manuel Andry.

The revolt began in January 1811 on Andry's plantation. Deslondes and other slaves attacked the Andry household, where they killed the slave master's son (although Andry himself escaped). The rebels then began traveling toward New Orleans, armed with weapons gathered at Andry's plantation. Whites mobilized to stop the rebellion, but not before Deslondes and the other rebelling slaves set fire to three plantations and killed numerous whites. A small white force led by Andry ultimately captured Deslondes, whose body was mutilated and burned following his execution. Other slave rebels were beheaded, and their heads placed on pikes along the Mississippi River.

The second rebellion, led by the slave Nat Turner, occurred in 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner had suffered not only from personal enslavement, but also from the additional trauma of having his wife sold away from him. Bolstered by Christianity, Turner became convinced that like Christ, he should lay down his life to end slavery. Mustering his relatives and friends, he began the rebellion August 22, killing scores of whites in the county. Whites mobilized quickly and within forty-eight hours had brought the rebellion to an end. Shocked by Nat Turner's Rebellion, Virginia's state legislature considered ending slavery in the state in order to provide greater security. In the end, legislators decided slavery would remain and that their state would continue to play a key role in the domestic slave trade.

## **SLAVE MARKETS**

As discussed above, after centuries of slave trade with West Africa, Congress banned the further importation of slaves beginning in 1808. The domestic slave trade then expanded rapidly. As the cotton trade grew in size

and importance, so did the domestic slave trade; the cultivation of cotton gave new life and importance to slavery, increasing the value of slaves. To meet the South's fierce demand for labor, American smugglers illegally transferred slaves through Florida and later through Texas. Many more slaves arrived illegally from Cuba; indeed, Cubans relied on the smuggling of slaves to prop up their finances. The largest number of slaves after 1808, however, came from the massive, legal internal slave market in which slave states in the Upper South sold enslaved men, women, and children to states in the Lower South. For slaves, the domestic trade presented the full horrors of slavery as children were ripped from their mothers and fathers and families destroyed, creating heartbreak and alienation.

Some slaveholders sought to increase the number of slave children by placing male slaves with fertile female slaves, and slave masters routinely raped their female slaves. The resulting births played an important role in slavery's expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century, as many slave children were born as a result of rape. One account written by a slave named William J. Anderson captures the horror of sexual exploitation in the antebellum South. Anderson wrote about how a Mississippi slaveholder

"divested a poor female slave of all wearing apparel, tied her down to stakes, and whipped her with a handsaw until he broke it over her naked body. In process of time he ravished [raped] her person, and became the father of a child by her. Besides, he always kept a colored Miss in the house with him. This is another curse of Slavery—concubinage and illegitimate connections—which is carried on to an alarming extent in the far South. A poor slave man who lives close by his wife, is permitted to visit her but very seldom, and other men, both white and colored, cohabit with her. It is undoubtedly the worst place of incest and bigamy in the world. A white man thinks nothing of putting a colored man out to carry the fore row [front row in field work], and carry on the same sport with the colored man's wife at the same time."

Anderson, a devout Christian, recognized and explains in his narrative that one of the evils of slavery is the way it undermines the family. Anderson was not the only critic of slavery to emphasize this point. Frederick Douglass, a Maryland slave who escaped to the North in 1838, elaborated

on this dimension of slavery in his 1845 narrative. He recounted how slave masters had to sell their own children whom they had with slave women to appease the white wives who despised their offspring.

The selling of slaves was a major business enterprise in the antebellum South, representing a key part of the economy. White men invested substantial sums in slaves, carefully calculating the annual returns they could expect from a slave as well as the possibility of greater profits through natural increase. The domestic slave trade was highly visible, and like the infamous Middle Passage that brought captive Africans to the Americas, it constituted an equally disruptive and horrifying journey now called the **second middle passage**. Between 1820 and 1860, white American traders sold a million or more slaves in the domestic slave market. Groups of slaves were transported by ship from places like Virginia, a state that specialized in raising slaves for sale, to New Orleans, where they were sold to planters in the Mississippi Valley. Other slaves made the overland trek from older states like North Carolina to new and booming Deep South states like Alabama.

New Orleans had the largest slave market in the United States ([\[link\]](#)). Slaveholders brought their slaves there from the East (Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas) and the West (Tennessee and Kentucky) to be sold for work in the Mississippi Valley. The slave trade benefited whites in the Chesapeake and Carolinas, providing them with extra income: A healthy young male slave in the 1850s could be sold for \$1,000 (approximately \$30,000 in 2014 dollars), and a planter who could sell ten such slaves collected a windfall.





*In Sale of Estates, Pictures and Slaves in the Rotunda, New Orleans (1853) by J. M. Starling, it is clear that slaves are considered property to be auctioned off, just like pictures or other items.*

In fact, by the 1850s, the demand for slaves reached an all-time high, and prices therefore doubled. A slave who would have sold for \$400 in the 1820s could command a price of \$800 in the 1850s. The high price of slaves in the 1850s and the inability of natural increase to satisfy demands led some southerners to demand the reopening of the international slave trade, a movement that caused a rift between the Upper South and the Lower South. Whites in the Upper South who sold slaves to their counterparts in the Lower South worried that reopening the trade would lower prices and therefore hurt their profits.

**Note:**

**John Brown on Slave Life in Georgia**

A slave named John Brown lived in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia before he escaped and moved to England. While there, he dictated his

autobiography to someone at the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, who published it in 1855.

"I really thought my mother would have died of grief at being obliged to leave her two children, her mother, and her relations behind. But it was of no use lamenting, the few things we had were put together that night, and we completed our preparations for being parted for life by kissing one another over and over again, and saying good bye till some of us little ones fell asleep. . . . And here I may as well tell what kind of man our new master was. He was of small stature, and thin, but very strong. He had sandy hair, a very red face, and chewed tobacco. His countenance had a very cruel expression, and his disposition was a match for it. He was, indeed, a very bad man, and used to flog us dreadfully. He would make his slaves work on one meal a day, until quite night, and after supper, set them to burn brush or spin cotton. We worked from four in the morning till twelve before we broke our fast, and from that time till eleven or twelve at night . . . we labored eighteen hours a day.

—John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Now in England*, 1855"

What features of the domestic slave trade does Brown's narrative illuminate? Why do you think he brought his story to an antislavery society? How do you think people responded to this narrative?

**Note:**

Read through several narratives at "Born in Slavery," part of the [American Memory](#) collection at the Library of Congress. Do these narratives have anything in common? What differences can you find between them?

## Section Summary

Slave labor in the antebellum South generated great wealth for plantation owners. Slaves, in contrast, endured daily traumas as the human property of masters. Slaves resisted their condition in a variety of ways, and many found some solace in Christianity and the communities they created in the

slave quarters. While some free blacks achieved economic prosperity and even became slaveholders themselves, the vast majority found themselves restricted by the same white-supremacist assumptions upon which the institution of slavery was based.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Under the law in the antebellum South, slaves were \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. servants
- B. animals
- C. property
- D. indentures

---

#### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

How did both slaveholders and slaves use the concept of paternalism to their advantage?

---

#### Solution:

Southern whites often used paternalism to justify the institution of slavery, arguing that slaves, like children, needed the care, feeding, discipline, and moral and religious education that they could provide. Slaves often used this misguided notion to their advantage: By feigning ignorance and playing into slaveholders' paternalistic perceptions of them, slaves found opportunities to resist their condition and gain a degree of freedom and autonomy.

## **Glossary**

paternalism

the premise that southern white slaveholders acted in the best interests of their slaves

second middle passage

the internal forced migration of slaves to the South and West in the United States

## Chapter 8: The New Slave States

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the expansionist goals of advocates of slavery
- Describe the filibuster expeditions undertaken during the antebellum era

Southern expansionists had spearheaded the drive to add more territory to the United States. They applauded the Louisiana Purchase and fervently supported Indian removal, the annexation of Texas, and the Mexican-American War. Drawing inspiration from the annexation of Texas, proslavery expansionists hoped to replicate that feat by bringing Cuba and other territories into the United States and thereby enlarging the American empire of slavery.

In the 1850s, the expansionist drive among white southerners intensified. Among southern imperialists, one way to push for the creation of an American empire of slavery was through the actions of filibusters—men who led unofficial military operations intended to seize land from foreign countries or foment revolution there. These unsanctioned military adventures were not part of the official foreign policy of the United States; American citizens simply formed themselves into private armies to forcefully annex new land without the government's approval.

An 1818 federal law made it a crime to undertake such adventures, which was an indication of both the reality of efforts at expansion through these illegal expeditions and the government's effort to create a U.S. foreign policy. Nonetheless, Americans continued to filibuster throughout the nineteenth century. In 1819, an expedition of two hundred Americans invaded Spanish Texas, intent on creating a republic modeled on the United States, only to be driven out by Spanish forces. Using force, taking action, and asserting white supremacy in these militaristic drives were seen by many as an ideal of American male vigor. President Jackson epitomized this military prowess as an officer in the Tennessee militia, where earlier in the century he had played a leading role in ending the Creek War and driving Indian peoples out of Alabama and Georgia. His reputation helped him to win the presidency in 1828 and again in 1832.

Filibustering plots picked up pace in the 1850s as the drive for expansion continued. Slaveholders looked south to the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America, hoping to add new slave states. Spanish Cuba became the objective of many American slaveholders in the 1850s, as debate over the island dominated the national conversation. Many who urged its annexation believed Cuba had to be made part of the United States to prevent it from going the route of Haiti, with black slaves overthrowing their masters and creating another black republic, a prospect horrifying to many in the United States. Americans also feared that the British, who had an interest in the sugar island, would make the first move and snatch Cuba from the United States. Since Britain had outlawed slavery in its colonies in 1833, blacks on the island of Cuba would then be free.

Narciso López, a Venezuelan who wanted to end Spanish control of the island, gained American support. He tried five times to take the island, with his last effort occurring in the summer of 1851 when he led an armed group from New Orleans. Thousands came out to cheer his small force as they set off to wrest Cuba from the Spanish. Unfortunately for López and his supporters, however, the effort to take Cuba did not produce the hoped-for spontaneous uprising of the Cuban people. Spanish authorities in Cuba captured and executed López and the American filibusters.

Efforts to take Cuba continued under President Franklin Pierce, who had announced at his inauguration in 1853 his intention to pursue expansion. In 1854, American diplomats met in Ostend, Belgium, to find a way to gain Cuba. They wrote a secret memo, known as the **Ostend Manifesto** (thought to be penned by James Buchanan, who was elected president two years later), stating that if Spain refused to sell Cuba to the United States, the United States was justified in taking the island as a national security measure.

The contents of this memo were supposed to remain secret, but details were leaked to the public, leading the House of Representatives to demand a copy. Many in the North were outraged over what appeared to be a southern scheme, orchestrated by what they perceived as the Slave Power—a term they used to describe the disproportionate influence that elite slaveholders wielded—to expand slavery. European powers also reacted with anger.

Southern annexationists, however, applauded the effort to take Cuba. The Louisiana legislature in 1854 asked the federal government to take decisive action, and John Quitman, a former Mississippi governor, raised money from slaveholders to fund efforts to take the island.

**Note:**

Read an 1860 editorial titled [Annexation of Cuba Made Easy](#) from the online archives of *The New York Times*. Does the author support annexation? Why or why not?

Controversy around the Ostend Manifesto caused President Pierce to step back from the plan to take Cuba. After his election, President Buchanan, despite his earlier expansionist efforts, denounced filibustering as the action of pirates. Filibustering caused an even wider gulf between the North and the South ([link](#)).



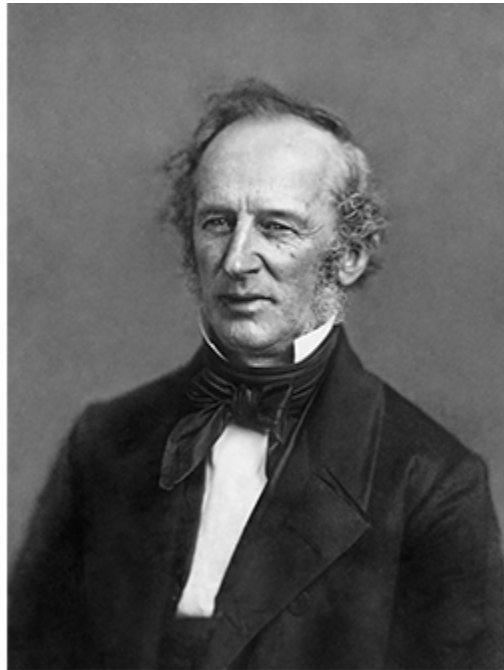
The “Ostend Doctrine” (1856), by artist Louis Maurer and lithographer Nathaniel Currier, mocks James Buchanan by depicting him being robbed, just as many northerners believed slaveholders were

attempting to rob Spain. The thugs robbing Buchanan use specific phrases from the Ostend Manifesto as they relieve him of his belongings.

Cuba was not the only territory in slaveholders' expansionist sights: some focused on Mexico and Central America. In 1855, Tennessee-born William Walker, along with an army of no more than sixty mercenaries, gained control of the Central American nation of Nicaragua. Previously, Walker had launched a successful invasion of Mexico, dubbing his conquered land the Republic of Sonora. In a relatively short period of time, Walker was dislodged from Sonora by Mexican authorities and forced to retreat back to the United States. His conquest of Nicaragua garnered far more attention, catapulting him into national popularity as the heroic embodiment of white supremacy ([link](#)).



(a)



(b)

Famed Civil War photographer Mathew Brady took this photograph (a) of “General” William Walker circa 1855–1860. Walker led a filibuster expedition and briefly



conquered Nicaragua, fulfilling a dream of many pro-expansionist southern slaveholders. Cornelius Vanderbilt (b), the shipping tycoon who controlled much of the traffic across Nicaragua between the Atlantic and the Pacific, clashed with Walker and ultimately supported Costa Rica in its war against him.

Why Nicaragua? Nicaragua presented a tempting target because it provided a quick route from the Caribbean to the Pacific: Only twelve miles of land stood between the Pacific Ocean, the inland Lake Nicaragua, and the river that drained into the Atlantic. Shipping from the East Coast to the West Coast of the United States had to travel either by land across the continent, south around the entire continent of South America, or through Nicaragua. Previously, American tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt ([link](#)) had recognized the strategic importance of Nicaragua and worked with the Nicaraguan government to control shipping there. The filibustering of William Walker may have excited expansionist-minded southerners, but it greatly upset Vanderbilt's business interests in the region.

Walker clung to the racist, expansionist philosophies of the proslavery South. In 1856, Walker made slavery legal in Nicaragua—it had been illegal there for thirty years—in a move to gain the support of the South. He also reopened the slave trade. In 1856, he was elected president of Nicaragua, but in 1857, he was chased from the country. When he returned to Central America in 1860, he was captured by the British and released to Honduran authorities, who executed him by firing squad.

## Section Summary

The decade of the 1850s witnessed various schemes to expand the American empire of slavery. The Ostend Manifesto articulated the right of the United States to forcefully seize Cuba if Spain would not sell it, while filibuster expeditions attempted to annex new slave states without the benefit of governmental approval. Those who pursued the goal of

expanding American slavery believed they embodied the true spirit of white racial superiority.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Why did southern expansionists conduct filibuster expeditions?

- A. to gain political advantage
- B. to annex new slave states
- C. to prove they could raise an army
- D. to map unknown territories

---

#### Solution:

B

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

The controversy at the heart of the Ostend Manifesto centered on the fate of:

- A. Ostend, Belgium
- B. Nicaragua
- C. Cuba
- D. Louisiana

---

#### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

Why did expansionists set their sights on the annexation of Spanish Cuba?

---

**Solution:**

Many slaveholding expansionists believed that the events of the Haitian Revolution could repeat themselves in Cuba, leading to the overthrow of slavery on the island and the creation of an independent black republic. Americans also feared that the British would seize Cuba—which, since Britain had outlawed slavery in its colonies in 1833, would render all slaves on the island free.

**Critical Thinking Questions****Exercise:****Problem:**

Compare and contrast the steamboats of the antebellum years with technologies today. In your estimation, what modern technology compares to steamboats in its transformative power?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Does the history of the cotton kingdom support or undermine the Jeffersonian vision of white farmers on self-sufficient farms? Explain your answer.

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Based on your reading of William J. Anderson's and John Brown's accounts, what types of traumas did slaves experience? How were the experiences of black women and men similar and different?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What strategies did slaves employ to resist, revolt, and sustain their own independent communities and cultures? How did slaves use white southerners' own philosophies—paternalism and Christianity, for example—to their advantage in these efforts?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What are the major arguments put forward by proslavery advocates? How would you argue against their statements?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Consider filibustering from the point of view of the Cuban or Nicaraguan people. If you lived in Cuba or Nicaragua, would you support filibustering? Why or why not?

**Glossary****Ostend Manifesto**

the secret diplomatic memo stating that if Spain refused to sell Cuba to the United States, the United States was justified in taking the island as a national security measure

## Chapter 9: Wealth and Culture in the South

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

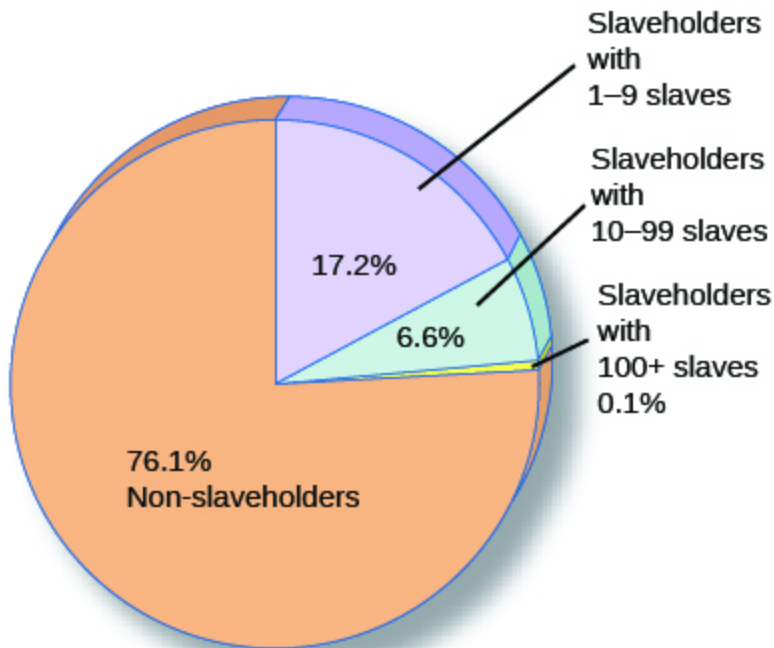
- Assess the distribution of wealth in the antebellum South
- Describe the southern culture of honor
- Identify the main proslavery arguments in the years prior to the Civil War

During the antebellum years, wealthy southern planters formed an elite master class that wielded most of the economic and political power of the region. They created their own standards of gentility and honor, defining ideals of southern white manhood and womanhood and shaping the culture of the South. To defend the system of forced labor on which their economic survival and genteel lifestyles depended, elite southerners developed several proslavery arguments that they levied at those who would see the institution dismantled.

### **SLAVERY AND THE WHITE CLASS STRUCTURE**

The South prospered, but its wealth was very unequally distributed. Upward social mobility did not exist for the millions of slaves who produced a good portion of the nation's wealth, while poor southern whites envisioned a day when they might rise enough in the world to own slaves of their own. Because of the cotton boom, there were more millionaires per capita in the Mississippi River Valley by 1860 than anywhere else in the United States. However, in that same year, only 3 percent of whites owned more than fifty slaves, and two-thirds of white households in the South did not own any slaves at all ([\[link\]](#)). Distribution of wealth in the South became less democratic over time; fewer whites owned slaves in 1860 than in 1840.

### White Class Structure in the South, 1860



As the wealth of the antebellum South increased, it also became more unequally distributed, and an ever-smaller percentage of slaveholders held a substantial number of slaves.

At the top of southern white society stood the planter elite, which comprised two groups. In the Upper South, an aristocratic gentry, generation upon generation of whom had grown up with slavery, held a privileged place. In the Deep South, an elite group of slaveholders gained new wealth from cotton. Some members of this group hailed from established families in the eastern states (Virginia and the Carolinas), while others came from humbler backgrounds. South Carolinian Nathaniel Heyward, a wealthy rice planter and member of the aristocratic gentry, came from an established family and sat atop the pyramid of southern slaveholders. He amassed an enormous estate; in 1850, he owned more than

eighteen hundred slaves. When he died in 1851, he left an estate worth more than \$2 million (approximately \$63 million in 2014 dollars).

As cotton production increased, new wealth flowed to the cotton planters. These planters became the staunchest defenders of slavery, and as their wealth grew, they gained considerable political power.

One member of the planter elite was Edward Lloyd V, who came from an established and wealthy family of Talbot County, Maryland. Lloyd had inherited his position rather than rising to it through his own labors. His hundreds of slaves formed a crucial part of his wealth. Like many of the planter elite, Lloyd's plantation was a masterpiece of elegant architecture and gardens ([link](#)).



The grand house of Edward Lloyd V advertised the status and wealth of its owner. In its heyday, the Lloyd family's plantation boasted holdings of forty-two thousand acres and one thousand slaves.

One of the slaves on Lloyd's plantation was Frederick Douglass, who escaped in 1838 and became an abolitionist leader, writer, statesman, and orator in the North. In his autobiography, Douglass described the plantation's elaborate gardens and racehorses, but also its underfed and brutalized slave population. Lloyd provided employment opportunities to other whites in Talbot County, many of whom served as slave traders and the "slave breakers" entrusted with beating and overworking unruly slaves into submission. Like other members of the planter elite, Lloyd himself served in a variety of local and national political offices. He was governor of Maryland from 1809 to 1811, a member of the House of Representatives from 1807 to 1809, and a senator from 1819 to 1826. As a representative and a senator, Lloyd defended slavery as the foundation of the American economy.

Wealthy plantation owners like Lloyd came close to forming an American ruling class in the years before the Civil War. They helped shape foreign and domestic policy with one goal in view: to expand the power and reach of the cotton kingdom of the South. Socially, they cultivated a refined manner and believed whites, especially members of their class, should not perform manual labor. Rather, they created an identity for themselves based on a world of leisure in which horse racing and entertainment mattered greatly, and where the enslavement of others was the bedrock of civilization.

Below the wealthy planters were the yeoman farmers, or small landowners ([link](#)). Below yeomen were poor, landless whites, who made up the majority of whites in the South. These landless white men dreamed of owning land and slaves and served as slave overseers, drivers, and traders in the southern economy. In fact, owning land and slaves provided one of the only opportunities for upward social and economic mobility. In the South, living the American dream meant possessing slaves, producing cotton, and owning land.





In this painting by Felix Octavius Carr Darley, a yeoman farmer carrying a scythe follows his livestock down the road.

Despite this unequal distribution of wealth, non-slaveholding whites shared with white planters a common set of values, most notably a belief in white supremacy. Whites, whether rich or poor, were bound together by racism. Slavery defused class tensions among them, because no matter how poor they were, white southerners had race in common with the mighty plantation owners. Non-slaveholders accepted the rule of the planters as defenders of their shared interest in maintaining a racial hierarchy. Significantly, all whites were also bound together by the constant, prevailing fear of slave uprisings.

**Note:**

**D. R. Hundley on the Southern Yeoman**

D. R. Hundley was a well-educated planter, lawyer, and banker from Alabama. Something of an amateur sociologist, he argued against the common northern assumption that the South was made up exclusively of two tiers of white residents: the very wealthy planter class and the very

poor landless whites. In his 1860 book, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, Hundley describes what he calls the “Southern Yeomen,” a social group he insists is roughly equivalent to the middle-class farmers of the North.

*"But you have no Yeomen in the South, my dear Sir? Beg your pardon, our dear Sir, but we have—hosts of them. I thought you had only poor White Trash? Yes, we dare say as much—and that the moon is made of green cheese! . . . Know, then, that the Poor Whites of the South constitute a separate class to themselves; the Southern Yeomen are as distinct from them as the Southern Gentleman is from the Cotton Snob. Certainly the Southern Yeomen are nearly always poor, at least so far as this world's goods are to be taken into account. As a general thing they own no slaves; and even in case they do, the wealthiest of them rarely possess more than from ten to fifteen. . . . The Southern Yeoman much resembles in his speech, religious opinions, household arrangements, indoor sports, and family traditions, the middle class farmers of the Northern States. He is fully as intelligent as the latter, and is on the whole much better versed in the lore of politics and the provisions of our Federal and State Constitutions. . . . [A]lthough not as a class pecuniarily interested in slave property, the Southern Yeomanry are almost unanimously pro-slavery in sentiment. Nor do we see how any honest, thoughtful person can reasonably find fault with them on this account.*

—D. R. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, 1860"

What elements of social relations in the South is Hundley attempting to emphasize for his readers? In what respects might his position as an educated and wealthy planter influence his understanding of social relations in the South?

Because race bound all whites together as members of the master race, non-slaveholding whites took part in civil duties. They served on juries and voted. They also engaged in the daily rounds of maintaining slavery by serving on neighborhood patrols to ensure that slaves did not escape and that rebellions did not occur. The practical consequence of such activities was that the institution of slavery, and its perpetuation, became a source of

commonality among different economic and social tiers that otherwise were separated by a gulf of difference.

Southern planters exerted a powerful influence on the federal government. Seven of the first eleven presidents owned slaves, and more than half of the Supreme Court justices who served on the court from its inception to the Civil War came from slaveholding states. However, southern white yeoman farmers generally did not support an active federal government. They were suspicious of the state bank and supported President Jackson's dismantling of the Second Bank of the United States. They also did not support taxes to create internal improvements such as canals and railroads; to them, government involvement in the economic life of the nation disrupted what they perceived as the natural workings of the economy. They also feared a strong national government might tamper with slavery.

Planters operated within a larger capitalist society, but the labor system they used to produce goods—that is, slavery—was similar to systems that existed before capitalism, such as feudalism and serfdom. Under capitalism, free workers are paid for their labor (by owners of capital) to produce commodities; the money from the sale of the goods is used to pay for the work performed. As slaves did not reap any earnings from their forced labor, some economic historians consider the antebellum plantation system a “pre-capitalist” system.

## **HONOR IN THE SOUTH**

A complicated code of honor among privileged white southerners, dictating the beliefs and behavior of “gentlemen” and “ladies,” developed in the antebellum years. Maintaining appearances and reputation was supremely important. It can be argued that, as in many societies, the concept of honor in the antebellum South had much to do with control over dependents, whether slaves, wives, or relatives. Defending their honor and ensuring that they received proper respect became preoccupations of whites in the slaveholding South. To question another man's assertions was to call his honor and reputation into question. Insults in the form of words or behavior, such as calling someone a coward, could trigger a rupture that might well end on the dueling ground ([link](#)). Dueling had largely disappeared in the

antebellum North by the early nineteenth century, but it remained an important part of the southern code of honor through the Civil War years. Southern white men, especially those of high social status, settled their differences with duels, before which antagonists usually attempted reconciliation, often through the exchange of letters addressing the alleged insult. If the challenger was not satisfied by the exchange, a duel would often result.



“The Modern Tribunal and Arbiter of Men’s Differences,” an illustration that appeared on the cover of *The Mascot*, a newspaper published in nineteenth-century New Orleans, reveals the importance of dueling in southern culture; it shows men

bowing before an altar on  
which are laid a pistol and  
knife.

The dispute between South Carolina's James Hammond and his erstwhile friend (and brother-in-law) Wade Hampton II illustrates the southern culture of honor and the place of the duel in that culture. A strong friendship bound Hammond and Hampton together. Both stood at the top of South Carolina's society as successful, married plantation owners involved in state politics. Prior to his election as governor of the state in 1842, Hammond became sexually involved with each of Hampton's four teenage daughters, who were his nieces by marriage. "[A]ll of them rushing on every occasion into my arms," Hammond confided in his private diary, "covering me with kisses, lolling on my lap, pressing their bodies almost into mine . . . and permitting my hands to stray unchecked." Hampton found out about these dalliances, and in keeping with the code of honor, could have demanded a duel with Hammond. However, Hampton instead tried to use the liaisons to destroy his former friend politically. This effort proved disastrous for Hampton, because it represented a violation of the southern code of honor. "As matters now stand," Hammond wrote, "he [Hampton] is a convicted dastard who, not having nerve to redress his own wrongs, put forward bullies to do it for him. . . . To challenge me [to a duel] would be to throw himself upon my mercy for he knows I am not bound to meet him [for a duel]." Because Hampton's behavior marked him as a man who lacked honor, Hammond was no longer bound to meet Hampton in a duel even if Hampton were to demand one. Hammond's reputation, though tarnished, remained high in the esteem of South Carolinians, and the governor went on to serve as a U.S. senator from 1857 to 1860. As for the four Hampton daughters, they never married; their names were disgraced, not only by the whispered-about scandal but by their father's actions in response to it; and no man of honor in South Carolina would stoop so low as to marry them.

## **GENDER AND THE SOUTHERN HOUSEHOLD**

The antebellum South was an especially male-dominated society. Far more than in the North, southern men, particularly wealthy planters, were patriarchs and sovereigns of their own household. Among the white members of the household, labor and daily ritual conformed to rigid gender delineations. Men represented their household in the larger world of politics, business, and war. Within the family, the patriarchal male was the ultimate authority. White women were relegated to the household and lived under the thumb and protection of the male patriarch. The ideal southern lady conformed to her prescribed gender role, a role that was largely domestic and subservient. While responsibilities and experiences varied across different social tiers, women's subordinate state in relation to the male patriarch remained the same.

Writers in the antebellum period were fond of celebrating the image of the ideal southern woman ([\[link\]](#)). One such writer, Thomas Roderick Dew, president of Virginia's College of William and Mary in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote approvingly of the virtue of southern women, a virtue he concluded derived from their natural weakness, piety, grace, and modesty. In his *Dissertation on the Characteristic Differences Between the Sexes*, he writes that southern women derive their power not by

"leading armies to combat, or of enabling her to bring into more formidable action the physical power which nature has conferred on her. No! It is but the better to perfect all those feminine graces, all those fascinating attributes, which render her the center of attraction, and which delight and charm all those who breathe the atmosphere in which she moves; and, in the language of Mr. Burke, would make ten thousand swords leap from their scabbards to avenge the insult that might be offered to her. By her very meekness and beauty does she subdue all around her."

Such popular idealizations of elite southern white women, however, are difficult to reconcile with their lived experience: in their own words, these women frequently described the trauma of childbirth, the loss of children, and the loneliness of the plantation.



This cover illustration from *Harper's Weekly* in 1861 shows the ideal of southern womanhood.

**Note:**

**Louisa Cheves McCord's "Woman's Progress"**

Louisa Cheves McCord was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1810. A child of some privilege in the South, she received an excellent education and became a prolific writer. As the excerpt from her poem "Woman's Progress" indicates, some southern women also contributed to the idealization of southern white womanhood.

"Sweet Sister! stoop not thou to be a man!  
Man has his place as woman hers; and she  
As made to comfort, minister and help;  
Moulded for gentler duties, ill fulfils  
His jarring destinies. Her mission is  
To labour and to pray; to help, to heal,  
To soothe, to bear; patient, with smiles, to suffer;

And with self-abnegation noble lose  
Her private interest in the dearer weal  
Of those she loves and lives for. Call not this—  
(The all-fulfilling of her destiny;  
She the world's soothing mother)—call it not,  
With scorn and mocking sneer, a drudgery.  
The ribald tongue profanes Heaven's holiest things,  
But holy still they are. The lowliest tasks  
Are sanctified in nobly acting them.  
Christ washed the apostles' feet, not thus cast shame  
Upon the God-like in him. Woman lives  
Man's constant prophet. If her life be true  
And based upon the instincts of her being,  
She is a living sermon of that truth  
Which ever through her gentle actions speaks,  
That life is given to labour and to love.

—Louisa Susanna Cheves McCord, "Woman's Progress," 1853"

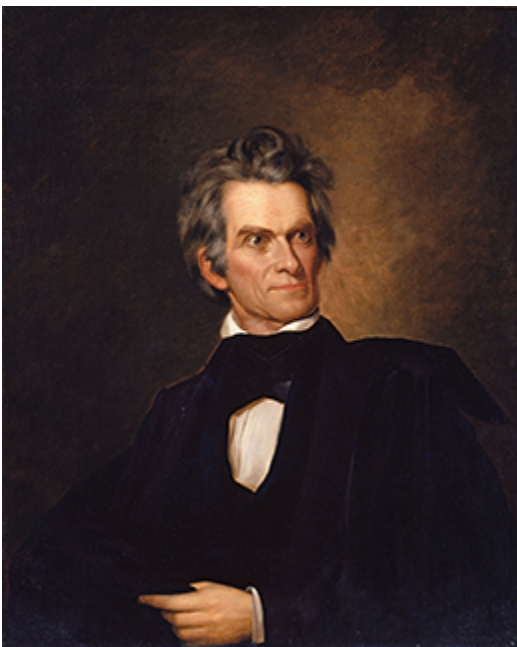
What womanly virtues does Louisa Cheves McCord emphasize? How might her social status, as an educated southern woman of great privilege, influence her understanding of gender relations in the South?

For slaveholding whites, the male-dominated household operated to protect gendered divisions and prevalent gender norms; for slave women, however, the same system exposed them to brutality and frequent sexual domination. The demands on the labor of slave women made it impossible for them to perform the role of domestic caretaker that was so idealized by southern men. That slaveholders put them out into the fields, where they frequently performed work traditionally thought of as male, reflected little the ideal image of gentleness and delicacy reserved for white women. Nor did the slave woman's role as daughter, wife, or mother garner any patriarchal protection. Each of these roles and the relationships they defined was subject to the prerogative of a master, who could freely violate enslaved women's persons, sell off their children, or separate them from their families.



## DEFENDING SLAVERY

With the rise of democracy during the Jacksonian era in the 1830s, slaveholders worried about the power of the majority. If political power went to a majority that was hostile to slavery, the South—and the honor of white southerners—would be imperiled. White southerners keen on preserving the institution of slavery bristled at what they perceived to be northern attempts to deprive them of their livelihood. Powerful southerners like South Carolinian John C. Calhoun ([\[link\]](#)) highlighted laws like the Tariff of 1828 as evidence of the North's desire to destroy the southern economy and, by extension, its culture. Such a tariff, he and others concluded, would disproportionately harm the South, which relied heavily on imports, and benefit the North, which would receive protections for its manufacturing centers. The tariff appeared to open the door for other federal initiatives, including the abolition of slavery. Because of this perceived threat to southern society, Calhoun argued that states could nullify federal laws. This belief illustrated the importance of the states' rights argument to the southern states. It also showed slaveholders' willingness to unite against the federal government when they believed it acted unjustly against their interests.



John C. Calhoun, shown here in a ca. 1845 portrait by George Alexander Healy, defended states' rights, especially the right of the southern states to protect slavery from a hostile northern majority.

As the nation expanded in the 1830s and 1840s, the writings of abolitionists—a small but vocal group of northerners committed to ending slavery—reached a larger national audience. White southerners responded by putting forth arguments in defense of slavery, their way of life, and their honor. Calhoun became a leading political theorist defending slavery and the rights of the South, which he saw as containing an increasingly embattled minority. He advanced the idea of a **concurrent majority**, a majority of a separate region (that would otherwise be in the minority of the nation) with the power to veto or disallow legislation put forward by a hostile majority.

Calhoun's idea of the concurrent majority found full expression in his 1850 essay "Disquisition on Government." In this treatise, he wrote about government as a necessary means to ensure the preservation of society, since society existed to "preserve and protect our race." If government grew hostile to society, then a concurrent majority had to take action, including forming a new government. "Disquisition on Government" advanced a profoundly anti-democratic argument. It illustrates southern leaders' intense suspicion of democratic majorities and their ability to effect legislation that would challenge southern interests.

**Note:**

Go to the [Internet Archive](#) to read John C. Calhoun's "Disquisition on Government." Why do you think he proposed the creation of a concurrent majority?

White southerners reacted strongly to abolitionists' attacks on slavery. In making their defense of slavery, they critiqued wage labor in the North. They argued that the Industrial Revolution had brought about a new type of slavery—wage slavery—and that this form of “slavery” was far worse than the slave labor used on southern plantations. Defenders of the institution also lashed out directly at abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison for daring to call into question their way of life. Indeed, Virginians cited Garrison as the instigator of Nat Turner’s 1831 rebellion.

The Virginian George Fitzhugh contributed to the defense of slavery with his book *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (1854). Fitzhugh argued that laissez-faire capitalism, as celebrated by Adam Smith, benefited only the quick-witted and intelligent, leaving the ignorant at a huge disadvantage. Slaveholders, he argued, took care of the ignorant—in Fitzhugh’s argument, the slaves of the South. Southerners provided slaves with care from birth to death, he asserted; this offered a stark contrast to the wage slavery of the North, where workers were at the mercy of economic forces beyond their control. Fitzhugh’s ideas exemplified southern notions of paternalism.

**Note:**

**George Fitzhugh’s Defense of Slavery**

George Fitzhugh, a southern writer of social treatises, was a staunch supporter of slavery, not as a necessary evil but as what he argued was a necessary good, a way to take care of slaves and keep them from being a burden on society. He published *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* in 1854, in which he laid out what he believed to be the benefits of slavery to both the slaves and society as a whole. According to Fitzhugh:

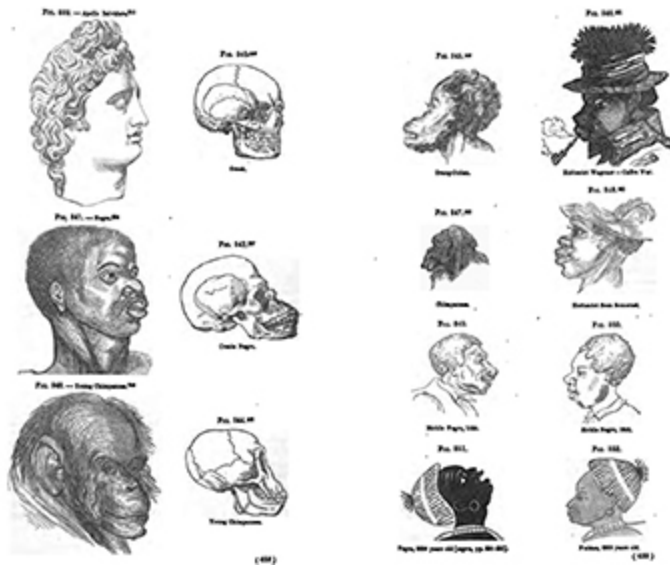
"[I]t is clear the Athenian democracy would not suit a negro nation, nor will the government of mere law suffice for the individual negro. He is but a grown up child and must be governed as a child . . . The master occupies towards him the place of parent or guardian. . . . The negro is improvident; will not lay up in summer for the wants of winter; will not accumulate in youth for the exigencies of age. He would become an insufferable burden

to society. Society has the right to prevent this, and can only do so by subjecting him to domestic slavery.

In the last place, the negro race is inferior to the white race, and living in their midst, they would be far outstripped or outwitted in the chase of free competition. . . . Our negroes are not only better off as to physical comfort than free laborers, but their moral condition is better."

What arguments does Fitzhugh use to promote slavery? What basic premise underlies his ideas? Can you think of a modern parallel to Fitzhugh's argument?

The North also produced defenders of slavery, including Louis Agassiz, a Harvard professor of zoology and geology. Agassiz helped to popularize **polygenism**, the idea that different human races came from separate origins. According to this formulation, no single human family origin existed, and blacks made up a race wholly separate from the white race. Agassiz's notion gained widespread popularity in the 1850s with the 1854 publication of George Gliddon and Josiah Nott's *Types of Mankind* and other books. The theory of polygenism codified racism, giving the notion of black inferiority the lofty mantle of science. One popular advocate of the idea posited that blacks occupied a place in evolution between the Greeks and chimpanzees ([link](#)).



This 1857 illustration by an advocate of polygenism indicates that the “Negro” occupies a place between the Greeks and chimpanzees. What does this image reveal about the methods of those who advocated polygenism?

## Section Summary

Although a small white elite owned the vast majority of slaves in the South, and most other whites could only aspire to slaveholders’ wealth and status, slavery shaped the social life of all white southerners in profound ways. Southern culture valued a behavioral code in which men’s honor, based on the domination of others and the protection of southern white womanhood, stood as the highest good. Slavery also decreased class tensions, binding whites together on the basis of race despite their inequalities of wealth. Several defenses of slavery were prevalent in the antebellum era, including Calhoun’s argument that the South’s “concurrent majority” could overrule federal legislation deemed hostile to southern interests; the notion that slaveholders’ care of their chattel made slaves better off than wage workers in the North; and the profoundly racist ideas underlying polygenism.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** The largest group of whites in the South \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. owned no slaves
  - B. owned between one and nine slaves each
  - C. owned between ten and ninety-nine slaves each
  - D. owned over one hundred slaves each
- 

**Solution:**

A

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

John C. Calhoun argued for greater rights for southerners with which idea?

- A. polygenism
  - B. nullification
  - C. concurrent majority
  - D. paternalism
- 

**Solution:**

C

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

How did defenders of slavery use the concept of paternalism to structure their ideas?

---

**Solution:**

Defenders of slavery, such as George Fitzhugh, argued that only the clever and the bright could truly benefit within a laissez-faire economy. Premising their argument on the notion that slaves were, by nature, intellectually inferior and less able to compete, such defenders maintained that slaves were better off in the care of paternalistic masters. While northern workers found themselves trapped in wage slavery, they argued, southern slaves' needs—for food, clothing, and shelter, among other things—were met by their masters' paternal benevolence.

**Glossary**

concurrent majority

a majority of a separate region (that would otherwise be in the minority of the nation) with the power to veto or disallow legislation put forward by a hostile majority

polygenism

the idea that blacks and whites come from different origins

## Chapter 10: The Dred Scott Decision

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of the Supreme Court's Dred Scott ruling
- Discuss the principles of the Republican Party as expressed by Abraham Lincoln in 1858

As president, Buchanan confronted a difficult and volatile situation. The nation needed a strong personality to lead it, and Buchanan did not possess this trait. The violence in Kansas demonstrated that applying popular sovereignty—the democratic principle of majority rule—to the territory offered no solution to the national battle over slavery. A decision by the Supreme Court in 1857, which concerned the slave Dred Scott, only deepened the crisis.

### DRED SCOTT

In 1857, several months after President Buchanan took the oath of office, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. Dred Scott ([link](#)), born a slave in Virginia in 1795, had been one of the thousands forced to relocate as a result of the massive internal slave trade and taken to Missouri, where slavery had been adopted as part of the Missouri Compromise. In 1820, Scott's owner took him first to Illinois and then to the Wisconsin territory. However, both of those regions were part of the Northwest Territory, where the 1787 Northwest Ordinance had prohibited slavery. When Scott returned to Missouri, he attempted to buy his freedom. After his owner refused, he sought relief in the state courts, arguing that by virtue of having lived in areas where slavery was banned, he should be free.





This 1888 portrait by Louis Schultze shows Dred Scott, who fought for his freedom through the American court system.

In a complicated set of legal decisions, a jury found that Scott, along with his wife and two children, were free. However, on appeal from Scott's owner, the state Superior Court reversed the decision, and the Scotts remained slaves. Scott then became the property of John Sanford (his name was misspelled as "Sandford" in later court documents), who lived in New York. He continued his legal battle, and because the issue involved Missouri and New York, the case fell under the jurisdiction of the federal court. In 1854, Scott lost in federal court and appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

In 1857, the Supreme Court—led by Chief Justice Roger Taney, a former slaveholder who had freed his slaves—handed down its decision. On the

question of whether Scott was free, the Supreme Court decided he remained a slave. The court then went beyond the specific issue of Scott's freedom to make a sweeping and momentous judgment about the status of blacks, both free and slave. Per the court, blacks could never be citizens of the United States. Further, the court ruled that Congress had no authority to stop or limit the spread of slavery into American territories. This proslavery ruling explicitly made the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional; implicitly, it made Douglas's popular sovereignty unconstitutional.

**Note:**

**Roger Taney on *Dred Scott v. Sandford***

In 1857, the United States Supreme Court ended years of legal battles when it ruled that Dred Scott, a slave who had resided in several free states, should remain a slave. The decision, written by Chief Justice Roger Taney, also stated that blacks could not be citizens and that Congress had no power to limit the spread of slavery. The excerpt below is from Taney's decision.

"A free negro of the African race, whose ancestors were brought to this country and sold as slaves, is not a "citizen" within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States. . . .

The only two clauses in the Constitution which point to this race treat them as persons whom it was morally lawfully to deal in as articles of property and to hold as slaves. . . .

Every citizen has a right to take with him into the Territory any article of property which the Constitution of the United States recognises as property. . . .

The Constitution of the United States recognises slaves as property, and pledges the Federal Government to protect it. And Congress cannot exercise any more authority over property of that description than it may constitutionally exercise over property of any other kind. . . .

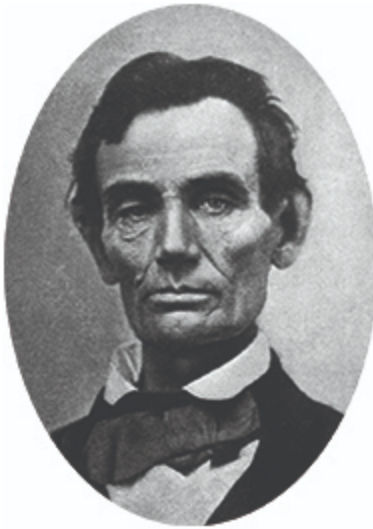
Prohibiting a citizen of the United States from taking with him his slaves when he removes to the Territory . . . is an exercise of authority over private property which is not warranted by the Constitution, and the removal of the plaintiff [Dred Scott] by his owner to that Territory gave him no title to freedom."

How did the Supreme Court define Dred Scott? How did the court interpret the Constitution on this score?

The Dred Scott decision infuriated Republicans by rendering their goal—to prevent slavery’s spread into the territories—unconstitutional. To Republicans, the decision offered further proof of the reach of the South’s Slave Power, which now apparently extended even to the Supreme Court. The decision also complicated life for northern Democrats, especially Stephen Douglas, who could no longer sell popular sovereignty as a symbolic concession to southerners from northern voters. Few northerners favored slavery’s expansion westward.

## **THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES**

The turmoil in Kansas, combined with the furor over the Dred Scott decision, provided the background for the 1858 senatorial contest in Illinois between Democratic senator Stephen Douglas and Republican hopeful Abraham Lincoln ([link](#)). Lincoln and Douglas engaged in seven debates before huge crowds that met to hear the two men argue the central issue of slavery and its expansion. Newspapers throughout the United States published their speeches. Whereas Douglas already enjoyed national recognition, Lincoln remained largely unknown before the debates. These appearances provided an opportunity for him to raise his profile with both northerners and southerners.



(a)



(b)

In 1858, Abraham Lincoln (a) debated Stephen Douglas (b) seven times in the Illinois race for the U.S. Senate. Although Douglas won the seat, the debates propelled Lincoln into the national political spotlight.

Douglas portrayed the Republican Party as an abolitionist effort—one that aimed to bring about **miscegenation**, or race-mixing through sexual relations or marriage. The “black Republicans,” Douglas declared, posed a dangerous threat to the Constitution. Indeed, because Lincoln declared the nation could not survive if the slave state–free state division continued, Douglas claimed the Republicans aimed to destroy what the founders had created.

For his part, Lincoln said: “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half Slave and half Free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it

is in the course of ultimate extinction: or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States—old as well as new, North as well as South.” Lincoln interpreted the Dred Scott decision and the Kansas-Nebraska Act as efforts to nationalize slavery: that is, to make it legal everywhere from New England to the Midwest and beyond.

**Note:**

**The Lincoln-Douglas Debates**

On August 21, 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas met in Ottawa, Illinois, for the first of seven debates. People streamed into Ottawa from neighboring counties and from as far away as Chicago. Reporting on the event was strictly partisan, with each of the candidates’ supporters claiming victory for their candidate. In this excerpt, Lincoln addresses the issues of equality between blacks and whites.

"[A]nything that argues me into his idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, . . . I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, . . . I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. . . .

[N]otwithstanding all this, there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. . . . [I]n the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.

—Lincoln’s speech on August 21, 1858, in Ottawa, Illinois"

How would you characterize Lincoln’s position on equality between blacks and whites? What types of equality exist, according to Lincoln?

**Note:**

Go to the [Lincoln Home National Historic Site](#) on the National Park Service's website to read excerpts from and full texts of the debates. Then, visit [The Lincoln/Douglas Debates of 1858](#) on the Northern Illinois University website to read different newspaper accounts of the debates. Do you see any major differences in the way the newspapers reported the debates? How does the commentary vary, and why?

During the debates, Lincoln demanded that Douglas explain whether or not he believed that the 1857 Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case trumped the right of a majority to prevent the expansion of slavery under the principle of popular sovereignty. Douglas responded to Lincoln during the second debate at Freeport, Illinois. In what became known as the **Freeport Doctrine**, Douglas adamantly upheld popular sovereignty, declaring: "It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a territory under the Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please." The Freeport Doctrine antagonized southerners who supported slavery, and caused a major rift in the Democratic Party. The doctrine did help Douglas in Illinois, however, where most voters opposed the further expansion of slavery. The Illinois legislature selected Douglas over Lincoln for the senate, but the debates had the effect of launching Lincoln into the national spotlight. Lincoln had argued that slavery was morally wrong, even as he accepted the racism inherent in slavery. He warned that Douglas and the Democrats would nationalize slavery through the policy of popular sovereignty. Though Douglas had survived the senate election challenge from Lincoln, his Freeport Doctrine damaged the political support he needed from the Southern Democrats. This helped him to lose the following presidential election, undermining the Democratic Party as a national force.

**Section Summary**

The Dred Scott decision of 1857 went well beyond the question of whether or not Dred Scott gained his freedom. Instead, the Supreme Court delivered

a far-reaching pronouncement about African Americans in the United States, finding they could never be citizens and that Congress could not interfere with the expansion of slavery into the territories. Republicans erupted in anger at this decision, which rendered their party's central platform unconstitutional. Abraham Lincoln fully articulated the Republican position on the issue of slavery in his 1858 debates with Senator Stephen Douglas. By the end of that year, Lincoln had become a nationally known Republican icon. For the Democrats' part, unity within their party frayed over both the Dred Scott case and the Freeport Doctrine, undermining the Democrats' future ability to retain control of the presidency.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** On what grounds did Dred Scott sue for freedom?

- A. the inherent inhumanity of slavery
- B. the cruelty of his master
- C. the fact that he had lived in free states
- D. the fact that his family would be torn apart

---

### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following was *not* a result of the Lincoln-Douglas debates?

- A. Douglas was elected senator of Illinois.
- B. Lincoln's national profile was raised.
- C. Citizens in both the North and South followed the debates closely.

D. Lincoln successfully defended the principle of popular sovereignty.

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** What are the main points of the Dred Scott decision?

---

**Solution:**

The Supreme Court decided that Dred Scott had not earned freedom by virtue of having lived in a free state; thus, Scott and his family would remain enslaved. More broadly, the Court ruled that blacks could never be citizens of the United States and that Congress had no authority to stop or limit the spread of slavery into American territories.

## Glossary

*Dred Scott v. Sandford*

an 1857 case in which the Supreme Court ruled that blacks could not be citizens and Congress had no jurisdiction to impede the expansion of slavery

Freeport Doctrine

a doctrine that emerged during the Lincoln-Douglas debates in which Douglas reaffirmed his commitment to popular sovereignty, including the right to halt the spread of slavery, despite the 1857 Dred Scott decision affirming slaveholders' right to bring their property wherever they wished

miscegenation

race-mixing through sexual relations or marriage



## Chapter 11: John Brown and the Election of 1860

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry and its results
- Analyze the results of the election of 1860

Events in the late 1850s did nothing to quell the country's sectional unrest, and compromise on the issue of slavery appeared impossible. Lincoln's 1858 speeches during his debates with Douglas made the Republican Party's position well known; Republicans opposed the extension of slavery and believed a Slave Power conspiracy sought to nationalize the institution. They quickly gained political momentum and took control of the House of Representatives in 1858. Southern leaders were divided on how to respond to Republican success. Southern extremists, known as "**Fire-Eaters**," openly called for secession. Others, like Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis, put forward a more moderate approach by demanding constitutional protection of slavery.

### JOHN BROWN

In October 1859, the radical abolitionist John Brown and eighteen armed men, both blacks and whites, attacked the federal arsenal in **Harpers Ferry**, Virginia. They hoped to capture the weapons there and distribute them among slaves to begin a massive uprising that would bring an end to slavery. Brown had already demonstrated during the 1856 Pottawatomie attack in Kansas that he had no patience for the nonviolent approach preached by pacifist abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison. Born in Connecticut in 1800, Brown ([link](#)) spent much of his life in the North, moving from Ohio to Pennsylvania and then upstate New York as his various business ventures failed. To him, slavery appeared an unacceptable evil that must be purged from the land, and like his Puritan forebears, he believed in using the sword to defeat the ungodly.



John Brown, shown here in a photograph from 1859, was a radical abolitionist who advocated the violent overthrow of slavery.

Brown had gone to Kansas in the 1850s in an effort to stop slavery, and there, he had perpetrated the killings at Pottawatomie. He told other abolitionists of his plan to take Harpers Ferry Armory and initiate a massive slave uprising. Some abolitionists provided financial support, while others, including Frederick Douglass, found the plot suicidal and refused to join. On October 16, 1859, Brown's force easily took control of the federal armory, which was unguarded ([\[link\]](#)). However, his vision of a mass uprising failed completely. Very few slaves lived in the area to rally to Brown's side, and the group found themselves holed up in the armory's engine house with townspeople taking shots at them. Federal troops, commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee, soon captured Brown and his

followers. On December 2, Brown was hanged by the state of Virginia for treason.



John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry represented the radical abolitionist's attempt to start a revolt that would ultimately end slavery. This 1859 illustration, captioned "Harper's Ferry insurrection—Interior of the Engine-House, just before the gate is broken down by the storming party—Col. Washington and his associates as captives, held by Brown as hostages," is from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*. Do you think this image represents a southern or northern version of the raid? How are the characters in the scene depicted?

**Note:**

Visit the [Avalon Project](#) on Yale Law School's website to read the impassioned speech that Henry David Thoreau delivered on October 30, 1859, arguing against the execution of John Brown. How does Thoreau characterize Brown? What does he ask of his fellow citizens?

John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry generated intense reactions in both the South and the North. Southerners grew especially apprehensive of the possibility of other violent plots. They viewed Brown as a terrorist bent on destroying their civilization, and support for secession grew. Their anxiety led several southern states to pass laws designed to prevent slave rebellions. It seemed that the worst fears of the South had come true: A hostile majority would stop at nothing to destroy slavery. Was it possible, one resident of Maryland asked, to "live under a government, a majority of whose subjects or citizens regard John Brown as a martyr and Christian hero?" Many antislavery northerners did in fact consider Brown a martyr to the cause, and those who viewed slavery as a sin saw easy comparisons between him and Jesus Christ.

## **THE ELECTION OF 1860**

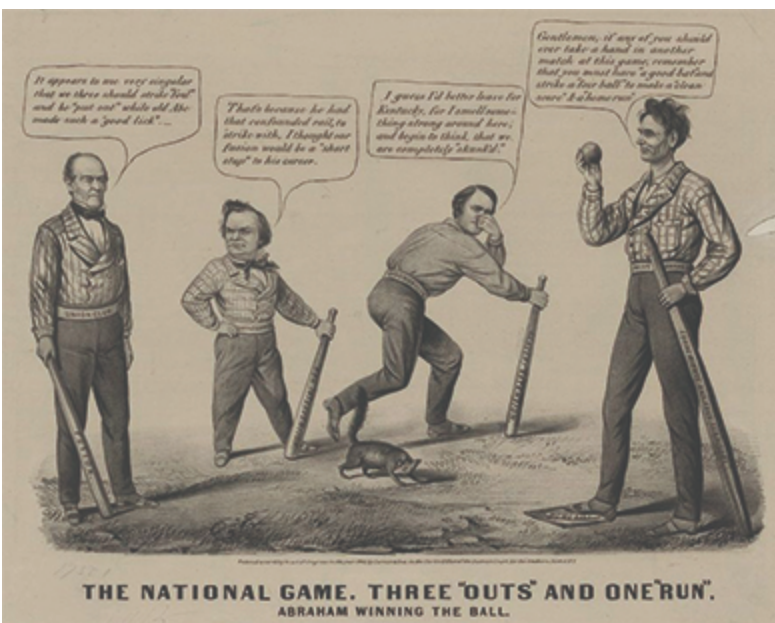
The election of 1860 threatened American democracy when the elevation of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency inspired secessionists in the South to withdraw their states from the Union.

Lincoln's election owed much to the disarray in the Democratic Party. The Dred Scott decision and the Freeport Doctrine had opened up huge sectional divisions among Democrats. Though Brown did not intend it, his raid had furthered the split between northern and southern Democrats. Fire-Eaters vowed to prevent a northern Democrat, especially Illinois's Stephen Douglas, from becoming their presidential candidate. These proslavery zealots insisted on a southern Democrat.

The Democratic nominating convention met in April 1860 in Charleston, South Carolina. However, it broke up after northern Democrats, who made up a majority of delegates, rejected Jefferson Davis's efforts to protect

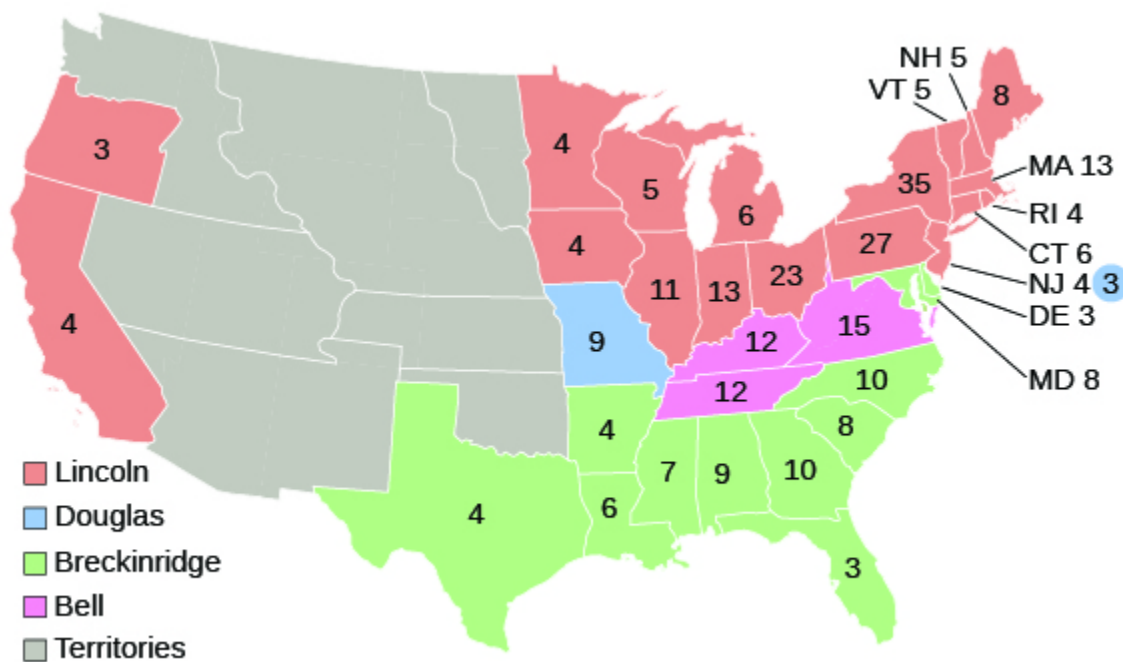
slavery in the territories. These northern Democratic delegates knew that supporting Davis on this issue would be very unpopular among the people in their states. A second conference, held in Baltimore, further illustrated the divide within the Democratic Party. Northern Democrats nominated Stephen Douglas, while southern Democrats, who met separately, put forward Vice President John Breckinridge from Kentucky. The Democratic Party had fractured into two competing sectional factions.

By offering two candidates for president, the Democrats gave the Republicans an enormous advantage. Also hoping to prevent a Republican victory, pro-Unionists from the border states organized the Constitutional Union Party and put up a fourth candidate, John Bell, for president, who pledged to end slavery agitation and preserve the Union but never fully explained how he'd accomplish this objective. In a pro-Lincoln political cartoon of the time ([link](#)), the presidential election is presented as a baseball game. Lincoln stands on home plate. A skunk raises its tail at the other candidates. Holding his nose, southern Democrat John Breckinridge holds a bat labeled "Slavery Extension" and declares "I guess I'd better leave for Kentucky, for I smell something strong around here, and begin to think, that we are completely skunk'd."



*The national game. Three “outs” and one “run”* (1860), by Currier and Ives, shows the two Democratic candidates and one Constitutional Union candidate who lost the 1860 election to Republican Lincoln, shown at right.

The Republicans nominated Lincoln, and in the November election, he garnered a mere 40 percent of the popular vote, though he won every northern state except New Jersey. (Lincoln’s name was blocked from even appearing on many southern states’ ballots by southern Democrats.) More importantly, Lincoln did gain a majority in the Electoral College ([link](#)). The Fire-Eaters, however, refused to accept the results. With South Carolina leading the way, Fire-Eaters in southern states began to withdraw formally from the United States in 1860. South Carolinian Mary Boykin Chesnut wrote in her diary about the reaction to the Lincoln’s election. “Now that the black radical Republicans have the power,” she wrote, “I suppose they will Brown us all.” Her statement revealed many southerners’ fear that with Lincoln as President, the South could expect more mayhem like the John Brown raid.



This map shows the disposition of electoral votes for the election of 1860. The votes were divided along almost perfect sectional lines.

## Section Summary

A new level of animosity and distrust emerged in 1859 in the aftermath of John Brown's raid. The South exploded in rage at the northern celebration of Brown as a heroic freedom fighter. Fire-Eaters called openly for disunion. Poisoned relations split the Democrats into northern and southern factions, a boon to the Republican candidate Lincoln. His election triggered the downfall of the American experiment with democracy as southern states began to leave the Union.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:



**Problem:** Why did John Brown attack the armory at Harpers Ferry?

- A. to seize weapons to distribute to slaves for a massive uprising
- B. to hold as a military base against proslavery forces
- C. in revenge after the sacking of Lawrence
- D. to prevent southern states from seceding

---

**Solution:**

A

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Which of the following did *not* contribute to Lincoln's victory in the election of 1860?

- A. the split between northern and southern democrats
- B. the defeat of the Whig party
- C. Lincoln's improved national standing after his senatorial debates with Stephen Douglas
- D. the Constitutional Union party's further splintering the vote

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What were southerners' and northerners' views of John Brown?

---

**Solution:**



Antislavery northerners tended to view Brown as a martyr for the antislavery cause; some saw in him a Christ-like figure who died for his beliefs. Southerners, for their part, considered Brown a terrorist. They felt threatened by northerners' deification of Brown and worried about the potential for other, similar armed insurrections.

## **Critical Thinking Questions**

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

Why would Americans view the Compromise of 1850 as a final solution to the sectional controversy that began with the Wilmot Proviso in 1846?

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

If you were a proslavery advocate, how would you feel about the platform of the newly formed Republican Party?

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

Based on the text of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, what was the position of the Republican Party in 1858? Was the Republican Party an abolitionist party? Why or why not?

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

John Brown is often described as a terrorist. Do you agree with this description? Why or why not? What attributes might make him fit this profile?

### **Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Was it possible to save American democracy in 1860? What steps might have been taken to maintain unity? Why do you think these steps were not taken?

**Glossary**

Harpers Ferry

the site of a federal arsenal in Virginia, where radical abolitionist John Brown staged an ill-fated effort to end slavery by instigating a mass uprising among slaves

Fire-Eaters

radical southern secessionists

## Chapter 12: Early Mobilization and War

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Confederacy and the Union
- Explain the strategic importance of the Battle of Bull Run and the Battle of Shiloh

In 1861, enthusiasm for war ran high on both sides. The North fought to restore the Union, which Lincoln declared could never be broken. The Confederacy, which by the summer of 1861 consisted of eleven states, fought for its independence from the United States. The continuation of slavery was a central issue in the war, of course, although abolitionism and western expansion also played roles, and Northerners and Southerners alike flocked eagerly to the conflict. Both sides thought it would be over quickly. Militarily, however, the North and South were more equally matched than Lincoln had realized, and it soon became clear that the war effort would be neither brief nor painless. In 1861, Americans in both the North and South romanticized war as noble and positive. Soon the carnage and slaughter would awaken them to the horrors of war.

### **THE FIRST BATTLE OF BULL RUN**

After the fall of Fort Sumter on April 15, 1861, Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers from state militias to join federal forces. His goal was a ninety-day campaign to put down the Southern rebellion. The response from state militias was overwhelming, and the number of Northern troops exceeded the requisition. Also in April, Lincoln put in place a naval blockade of the South, a move that gave tacit recognition of the Confederacy while providing a legal excuse for the British and the French to trade with Southerners. The Confederacy responded to the blockade by declaring that a state of war existed with the United States. This official pronouncement confirmed the beginning of the Civil War. Men rushed to enlist, and the Confederacy turned away tens of thousands who hoped to defend the new nation.

Many believed that a single, heroic battle would decide the contest. Some questioned how committed Southerners really were to their cause.

Northerners hoped that most Southerners would not actually fire on the American flag. Meanwhile, Lincoln and military leaders in the North hoped a quick blow to the South, especially if they could capture the Confederacy's new capital of Richmond, Virginia, would end the rebellion before it went any further. On July 21, 1861, the two armies met near Manassas, Virginia, along Bull Run Creek, only thirty miles from Washington, DC. So great was the belief that this would be a climactic Union victory that many Washington socialites and politicians brought picnic lunches to a nearby area, hoping to witness history unfolding before them. At the First Battle of Bull Run, also known as First Manassas, some sixty thousand troops assembled, most of whom had never seen combat, and each side sent eighteen thousand into the fray. The Union forces attacked first, only to be pushed back. The Confederate forces then carried the day, sending the Union soldiers and Washington, DC, onlookers scrambling back from Virginia and destroying Union hopes of a quick, decisive victory. Instead, the war would drag on for four long, deadly years ([link](#)).



The First Battle of Bull Run, which many Northerners thought would put a quick and decisive end to the South's rebellion, ended with a Confederate victory.

## **BALANCE SHEET: THE UNION AND THE CONFEDERACY**

As it became clearer that the Union would not be dealing with an easily quashed rebellion, the two sides assessed their strengths and weaknesses. At the onset of the war, in 1861 and 1862, they stood as relatively equal combatants.

The Confederates had the advantage of being able to wage a defensive war, rather than an offensive one. They had to protect and preserve their new boundaries, but they did not have to be the aggressors against the Union. The war would be fought primarily in the South, which gave the Confederates the advantages of the knowledge of the terrain and the support of the civilian population. Further, the vast coastline from Texas to Virginia offered ample opportunities to evade the Union blockade. And with the addition of the Upper South states, especially Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, the Confederacy gained a much larger share of natural resources and industrial might than the Deep South states could muster.

Still, the Confederacy had disadvantages. The South's economy depended heavily on the export of cotton, but with the naval blockade, the flow of cotton to England, the region's primary importer, came to an end. The blockade also made it difficult to import manufactured goods. Although the secession of the Upper South added some industrial assets to the Confederacy, overall, the South lacked substantive industry or an extensive railroad infrastructure to move men and supplies. To deal with the lack of commerce and the resulting lack of funds, the Confederate government began printing paper money, leading to runaway inflation ([\[link\]](#)). The advantage that came from fighting on home territory quickly turned to a disadvantage when Confederate armies were defeated and Union forces destroyed Southern farms and towns, and forced Southern civilians to take to the road as refugees. Finally, the population of the South stood at fewer than nine million people, of whom nearly four million were black slaves,

compared to over twenty million residents in the North. These limited numbers became a major factor as the war dragged on and the death toll rose.



The Confederacy started printing paper money at an accelerated rate, causing runaway inflation and an economy in which formerly well-off people were unable to purchase food.

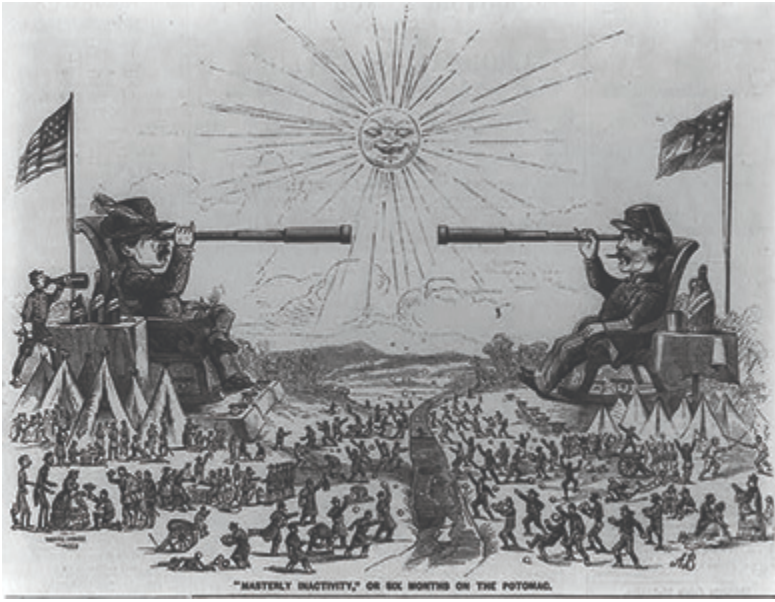
The Union side held many advantages as well. Its larger population, bolstered by continued immigration from Europe throughout the 1860s, gave it greater manpower reserves to draw upon. The North's greater industrial capabilities and extensive railroad grid made it far better able to mobilize men and supplies for the war effort. The Industrial Revolution and the transportation revolution, beginning in the 1820s and continuing over the next several decades, had transformed the North. Throughout the war, the North was able to produce more war materials and move goods more quickly than the South. Furthermore, the farms of New England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Old Northwest, and the prairie states supplied Northern civilians and Union troops with abundant food throughout the war. Food shortages and hungry civilians were common in the South, where the best land was devoted to raising cotton, but not in the North.

Unlike the South, however, which could hunker down to defend itself and needed to maintain relatively short supply lines, the North had to go forth and conquer. Union armies had to establish long supply lines, and Union soldiers had to fight on unfamiliar ground and contend with a hostile civilian population off the battlefield. Furthermore, to restore the Union—Lincoln’s overriding goal, in 1861—the United States, after defeating the Southern forces, would then need to pacify a conquered Confederacy, an area of over half a million square miles with nearly nine million residents. In short, although it had better resources and a larger population, the Union faced a daunting task against the well-positioned Confederacy.

## **MILITARY STALEMATE**

The military forces of the Confederacy and the Union battled in 1861 and early 1862 without either side gaining the upper hand. The majority of military leaders on both sides had received the same military education and often knew one another personally, either from their time as students at West Point or as commanding officers in the Mexican-American War. This familiarity allowed them to anticipate each other’s strategies. Both sides believed in the use of concentrated armies charged with taking the capital city of the enemy. For the Union, this meant the capture of the Confederate capital in Richmond, Virginia, whereas Washington, DC, stood as the prize for Confederate forces. After hopes of a quick victory faded at Bull Run, the months dragged on without any major movement on either side ([\[link\]](#)).





As this cartoon indicates, the fighting strategy at the beginning of the war included watchful waiting by the leaders of the North and South.

General George B. McClellan, the **general in chief** of the army, responsible for overall control of Union land forces, proved especially reluctant to engage in battle with the Confederates. In direct command of the **Army of the Potomac**, the Union fighting force operating outside Washington, DC, McClellan believed, incorrectly, that Confederate forces were too strong to defeat and was reluctant to risk his troops in battle. His cautious nature made him popular with his men but not with the president or Congress. By 1862, however, both President Lincoln and the new Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had tired of waiting. The Union put forward a new effort to bolster troop strength, enlisting one million men to serve for three-year stints in the Army of the Potomac. In January 1862, Lincoln and Stanton ordered McClellan to invade the Confederacy with the goal of capturing Richmond.

To that end, General McClellan slowly moved 100,000 soldiers of the Army of the Potomac toward Richmond but stopped a few miles outside the city. As he did so, a Confederate force led by Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson



moved north to take Washington, DC. To fend off Jackson's attack, somewhere between one-quarter and one-third of McClellan's soldiers, led by Major General Irvin McDowell, returned to defend the nation's capital, a move that Jackson hoped would leave the remaining troops near Richmond more vulnerable. Having succeeded in drawing off a sizable portion of the Union force, he joined General Lee to launch an attack on McClellan's remaining soldiers near Richmond. From June 25 to July 1, 1862, the two sides engaged in the brutal Seven Days Battles that killed or wounded almost twenty thousand Confederate and ten thousand Union soldiers. McClellan's army finally returned north, having failed to take Richmond.

General Lee, flush from his success at keeping McClellan out of Richmond, tried to capitalize on the Union's failure by taking the fighting northward. He moved his forces into northern Virginia, where, at the Second Battle of Bull Run, the Confederates again defeated the Union forces. Lee then pressed into Maryland, where his troops met the much larger Union forces near Sharpsburg, at Antietam Creek. The ensuing one-day battle on September 17, 1862, led to a tremendous loss of life. Although there are varying opinions about the total number of deaths, eight thousand soldiers were killed or wounded, more than on any other single day of combat. Once again, McClellan, mistakenly believing that the Confederate troops outnumbered his own, held back a significant portion of his forces. Lee withdrew from the field first, but McClellan, fearing he was outnumbered, refused to pursue him.

The Union army's inability to destroy Lee's army at Antietam made it clear to Lincoln that McClellan would never win the war, and the president was forced to seek a replacement. Lincoln wanted someone who could deliver a decisive Union victory. He also personally disliked McClellan, who referred to the president as a "baboon" and a "gorilla," and constantly criticized his decisions. Lincoln chose General Ambrose E. Burnside to replace McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac, but Burnside's efforts to push into Virginia failed in December 1862, as Confederates held their position at Fredericksburg and devastated Burnside's forces with heavy artillery fire. The Union's defeat at Fredericksburg harmed morale in the North but bolstered Confederate spirits. By the end of 1862, the Confederates were still holding their ground in Virginia. Burnside's failure

led Lincoln to make another change in leadership, and Joseph “Fighting Joe” Hooker took over command of the Army of the Potomac in January 1863.

General Ulysses S. Grant’s **Army of the West**, operating in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Mississippi River Valley, had been more successful. In the western campaign, the goal of both the Union and the Confederacy was to gain control of the major rivers in the west, especially the Mississippi. If the Union could control the Mississippi, the Confederacy would be split in two. The fighting in this campaign initially centered in Tennessee, where Union forces commanded by Grant pushed Confederate troops back and gained control of the state. The major battle in the western theater took place at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, on April 6 and 7, 1862. Grant’s army was camped on the west side of the Tennessee River near a small log church called Shiloh, which gave the battle its name. On Sunday morning, April 6, Confederate forces under General Albert Sidney Johnston attacked Grant’s encampment with the goal of separating them from their supply line on the Tennessee River and driving them into the swamps on the river’s western side, where they could be destroyed. Union general William Tecumseh Sherman tried to rally the Union forces as Grant, who had been convalescing from an injured leg when the attack began and was unable to walk without crutches, called for reinforcements and tried to mount a defense. Many of Union troops fled in terror.

Unfortunately for the Confederates, Johnston was killed on the afternoon of the first day. Leadership of the Southern forces fell to General P. G. T. Beauregard, who ordered an assault at the end of that day. This assault was so desperate that one of the two attacking columns did not even have ammunition. Heavily reinforced Union forces counterattacked the next day, and the Confederate forces were routed. Grant had maintained the Union foothold in the western part of the Confederacy. The North could now concentrate on its efforts to gain control of the Mississippi River, splitting the Confederacy in two and depriving it of its most important water route.

**Note:**

Read a [first-hand account](#) from a Confederate soldier at the Battle at Shiloh, followed by the [perspective of a Union soldier](#) at the same battle.

In the spring and summer of 1862, the Union was successful in gaining control of part of the Mississippi River. In April 1862, the Union navy under Admiral David Farragut fought its way past the forts that guarded New Orleans and fired naval guns upon the below-sea-level city. When it became obvious that New Orleans could no longer be defended, Confederate major general Marshall Lovell sent his artillery upriver to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Armed civilians in New Orleans fought the Union forces that entered the city. They also destroyed ships and military supplies that might be used by the Union. Upriver, Union naval forces also bombarded Fort Pillow, forty miles from Memphis, Tennessee, a Southern industrial center and one of the largest cities in the Confederacy. On June 4, 1862, the Confederate defenders abandoned the fort. On June 6, Memphis fell to the Union after the ships defending it were destroyed.

## Section Summary

Many in both the North and the South believed that a short, decisive confrontation in 1861 would settle the question of the Confederacy. These expectations did not match reality, however, and the war dragged on into a second year. Both sides mobilized, with advantages and disadvantages on each side that led to a rough equilibrium. The losses of battles at Manassas and Fredericksburg, Virginia, kept the North from achieving the speedy victory its generals had hoped for, but the Union did make gains and continued to press forward. While they could not capture the Southern capital of Richmond, they were victorious in the Battle of Shiloh and captured New Orleans and Memphis. Thus, the Confederates lost major ground on the western front.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

All the following were strengths of the Union *except* \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a large population
  - B. substantial industry
  - C. an extensive railroad
  - D. the ability to fight defensively, rather than offensively
- 

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

All the following were strengths of the Confederacy *except* \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the ability to wage a defensive war
  - B. shorter supply lines
  - C. the resources of the Upper South states
  - D. a strong navy
- 

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What military successes and defeats did the Union experience in 1862?

---

**Solution:**

In the eastern part of the Confederacy, the Army of the Potomac met with mixed success. The Union army failed to capture Richmond and

won at Antietam only because the Confederates withdrew from the field first. In the western part of the Confederacy, the Army of the West won the Battle of Shiloh, and the Union navy captured New Orleans and Memphis.

## **Glossary**

Army of the Potomac

the Union fighting force operating outside Washington, DC

Army of the West

the Union fighting force operating in Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Mississippi River Valley

general in chief

the commander of army land forces

## Chapter 13: The Origins of the Civil War

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the major events that occurred during the Secession Crisis
- Describe the creation and founding principles of the Confederate States of America



(credit "1865": modification of work by "Alaskan Dude"/Wikimedia Commons)

The 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln was a turning point for the United States. Throughout the tumultuous 1850s, the Fire-Eaters of the southern states had been threatening to leave the Union. With Lincoln's election, they prepared to make good on their threats. Indeed, the Republican president-elect appeared to be their worst nightmare. The Republican Party committed itself to keeping slavery out of the territories as the country expanded westward, a position that shocked southern sensibilities. Meanwhile, southern leaders suspected that Republican abolitionists would employ the violent tactics of John Brown to deprive southerners of their slave property. The threat posed by the Republican victory in the election of

1860 spurred eleven southern states to leave the Union to form the Confederate States of America, a new republic dedicated to maintaining and expanding slavery. The Union, led by President Lincoln, was unwilling to accept the departure of these states and committed itself to restoring the country. Beginning in 1861 and continuing until 1865, the United States engaged in a brutal Civil War that claimed the lives of over 600,000 soldiers. By 1863, the conflict had become not only a war to save the Union, but also a war to end slavery in the United States. Only after four years of fighting did the North prevail. The Union was preserved, and the institution of slavery had been destroyed in the nation.

## **THE CAUSES OF THE CIVIL WAR**

Lincoln's election sparked the southern secession fever into flame, but it did not cause the Civil War. For decades before Lincoln took office, the sectional divisions in the country had been widening. Both the Northern and southern states engaged in inflammatory rhetoric and agitation, and violent emotions ran strong on both sides. Several factors played into the ultimate split between the North and the South.

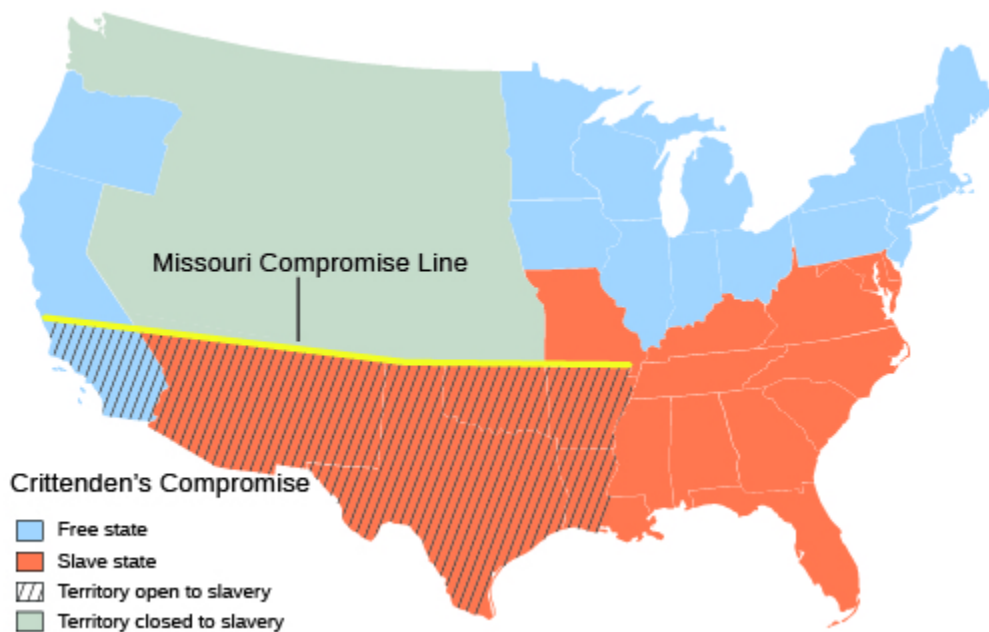
One key irritant was the question of slavery's expansion westward. The debate over whether new states would be slave or free reached back to the controversy over statehood for Missouri beginning in 1819 and Texas in the 1830s and early 1840s. This question arose again after the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), when the government debated whether slavery would be permitted in the territories taken from Mexico. Efforts in Congress to reach a compromise in 1850 fell back on the principle of popular sovereignty—letting the people in the new territories south of the 1820 Missouri Compromise line decide whether to allow slavery. This same principle came to be applied to the Kansas-Nebraska territories in 1854, a move that added fuel to the fire of sectional conflict by destroying the Missouri Compromise boundary and leading to the birth of the Republican Party. In the end, popular sovereignty proved to be no solution at all. This was especially true in “Bleeding Kansas” in the mid-1850s, as pro- and antislavery forces battled each another in an effort to gain the upper hand.

The small but very vocal abolitionist movement further contributed to the escalating tensions between the North and the South. Since the 1830s, abolitionists, led by journalist and reformer William Lloyd Garrison, had cast slavery as a national sin and called for its immediate end. For three decades, the abolitionists—a minority even within the antislavery movement—had had a significant effect on American society by bringing the evils of slavery into the public consciousness. By the 1850s, some of the most radical abolitionists, such as John Brown, had resorted to violence in their efforts to destroy the institution of slavery.

The formation of the Liberty Party (1840), the Free-Soil Party (1848), and the Republican Party (1854), all of which strongly opposed the spread of slavery to the West, brought the question solidly into the political arena. Although not all those who opposed the westward expansion of slavery had a strong abolitionist bent, the attempt to limit slaveholders' control of their human property stiffened the resolve of southern leaders to defend their society at all costs. Prohibiting slavery's expansion, they argued, ran counter to fundamental American property rights. Across the country, people of all political stripes worried that the nation's arguments would cause irreparable rifts in the country.

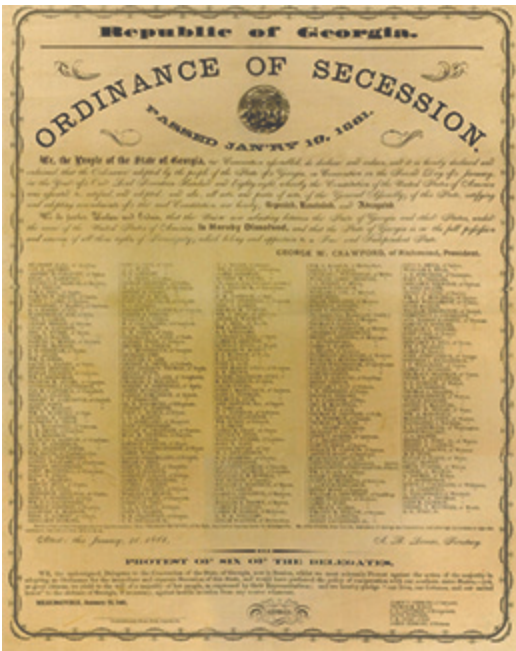
Despite the ruptures and tensions, by the 1860s, some hope of healing the nation still existed. Before Lincoln took office, John Crittenden, a senator from Kentucky who had helped form the Constitutional Union Party during the 1860 presidential election, attempted to defuse the explosive situation by offering six constitutional amendments and a series of resolutions, known as the **Crittenden Compromise**. Crittenden's goal was to keep the South from seceding, and his strategy was to transform the Constitution to explicitly protect slavery forever. Specifically, Crittenden proposed an amendment that would restore the 36°30' line from the Missouri Compromise and extend it all the way to the Pacific Ocean, protecting and ensuring slavery south of the line while prohibiting it north of the line ([\[link\]](#)). He further proposed an amendment that would prohibit Congress from abolishing slavery anywhere it already existed or from interfering with the interstate slave trade.





Crittenden's Compromise would protect slavery in all states where it already existed. More importantly, however, it proposed to allow the western expansion of slavery into states below the Missouri Compromise line.

Republicans, including President-elect Lincoln, rejected Crittenden's proposals because they ran counter to the party's goal of keeping slavery out of the territories. The southern states also rejected Crittenden's attempts at compromise, because it would prevent slaveholders from taking their human chattel north of the 36°30' line. On December 20, 1860, only a few days after Crittenden's proposal was introduced in Congress, South Carolina began the march towards war when it seceded from the United States. Three more states of the Deep South—Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama—seceded before the U.S. Senate rejected Crittenden's proposal on January 16, 1861. Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas joined them in rapid succession on January 19, January 26, and February 1, respectively ([link](#)). In many cases, these secessions occurred after extremely divided conventions and popular votes. A lack of unanimity prevailed in much of the South.



Georgia's Ordinance of Secession and those of the other Deep South states were all based on that of South Carolina, which was drafted just a month after Abraham Lincoln was elected.

**Note:**

Explore the causes, battles, and aftermath of the Civil War at the [interactive website](#) offered by the National Parks Service.

## THE CREATION OF THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

The seven Deep South states that seceded quickly formed a new government. In the opinion of many Southern politicians, the federal Constitution that united the states as one nation was a contract by which individual states had agreed to be bound. However, they maintained, the states had not sacrificed their autonomy and could withdraw their consent to be controlled by the federal government. In their eyes, their actions were in keeping with the nature of the Constitution and the social contract theory of government that had influenced the founders of the American Republic.

The new nation formed by these men would not be a federal union, but a confederation. In a confederation, individual member states agree to unite under a central government for some purposes, such as defense, but to retain autonomy in other areas of government. In this way, states could protect themselves, and slavery, from interference by what they perceived to be an overbearing central government. The constitution of the Confederate States of America (CSA), or the **Confederacy**, drafted at a convention in Montgomery, Alabama, in February 1861, closely followed the 1787 Constitution. The only real difference between the two documents centered on slavery. The Confederate Constitution declared that the new nation existed to defend and perpetuate racial slavery, and the leadership of the slaveholding class. Specifically, the constitution protected the interstate slave trade, guaranteed that slavery would exist in any new territory gained by the Confederacy, and, perhaps most importantly, in Article One, Section Nine, declared that “No . . . law impairing or denying the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed.” Beyond its focus on slavery, the Confederate Constitution resembled the 1787 U.S. Constitution. It allowed for a Congress composed of two chambers, a judicial branch, and an executive branch with a president to serve for six years.

The convention delegates chose Jefferson Davis of Mississippi to lead the new provisional government as president and Alexander Stephens of Georgia to serve as vice president until elections could be held in the spring and fall of 1861. By that time, four new states—Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina—had joined the CSA. As 1861 progressed, the Confederacy claimed Missouri and Kentucky, even though no ordinance of secession had been approved in those states. Southern nationalism ran

high, and the Confederacy, buoyed by its sense of purpose, hoped that their new nation would achieve eminence in the world.

By the time Lincoln reached Washington, DC, in February 1861, the CSA had already been established. The new president confronted an unprecedented crisis. A conference held that month with delegates from the Southern states failed to secure a promise of peace or to restore the Union. On inauguration day, March 4, 1861, the new president repeated his views on slavery: “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.” His recognition of slavery in the South did nothing to mollify slaveholders, however, because Lincoln also pledged to keep slavery from expanding into the new western territories. Furthermore, in his inaugural address, Lincoln made clear his commitment to maintaining federal power against the secessionists working to destroy it. Lincoln declared that the Union could not be dissolved by individual state actions, and, therefore, secession was unconstitutional.

**Note:**

Read [Lincoln’s entire inaugural address](#) at the Yale Avalon project’s website. How would Lincoln’s audience have responded to this speech?

## **FORT SUMTER**

President Lincoln made it clear to Southern secessionists that he would fight to maintain federal property and to keep the Union intact. Other politicians, however, still hoped to avoid the use of force to resolve the crisis. In February 1861, in an effort to entice the rebellious states to return to the Union without resorting to force, Thomas Corwin, a representative from Ohio, introduced a proposal to amend the Constitution in the House of Representatives. His was but one of several measures proposed in January and February 1861, to head off the impending conflict and save the United States. The proposed amendment would have made it impossible for Congress to pass any law abolishing slavery. The proposal passed the

House on February 28, 1861, and the Senate passed the proposal on March 2, 1861. It was then sent to the states to be ratified. Once ratified by three-quarters of state legislatures, it would become law. In his inaugural address, Lincoln stated that he had no objection to the amendment, and his predecessor James Buchanan had supported it. By the time of Lincoln's inauguration, however, seven states had already left the Union. Of the remaining states, Ohio ratified the amendment in 1861, and Maryland and Illinois did so in 1862. Despite this effort at reconciliation, the Confederate states did not return to the Union.

Indeed, by the time of the Corwin amendment's passage through Congress, Confederate forces in the Deep South had already begun to take over federal forts. The loss of **Fort Sumter**, in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, proved to be the flashpoint in the contest between the new Confederacy and the federal government. A small Union garrison of fewer than one hundred soldiers and officers held the fort, making it a vulnerable target for the Confederacy. Fire-Eaters pressured Jefferson Davis to take Fort Sumter and thereby demonstrate the Confederate government's resolve. Some also hoped that the Confederacy would gain foreign recognition, especially from Great Britain, by taking the fort in the South's most important Atlantic port. The situation grew dire as local merchants refused to sell food to the fort's Union soldiers, and by mid-April, the garrison's supplies began to run out. President Lincoln let it be known to Confederate leaders that he planned to resupply the Union forces. His strategy was clear: The decision to start the war would rest squarely on the Confederates, not on the Union. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces in Charleston began a bombardment of Fort Sumter ([\[link\]](#)). Two days later, the Union soldiers there surrendered.



The Confederacy's attack on Fort Sumter, depicted here in an 1861 lithograph by Currier and Ives, stoked pro-war sentiment on both sides of the conflict.

The attack on Fort Sumter meant war had come, and on April 15, 1861, Lincoln called upon loyal states to supply armed forces to defeat the rebellion and regain Fort Sumter. Faced with the need to choose between the Confederacy and the Union, border states and those of the Upper South, which earlier had been reluctant to dissolve their ties with the United States, were inspired to take action. They quickly voted for secession. A convention in Virginia that had been assembled earlier to consider the question of secession voted to join the Confederacy on April 17, two days after Lincoln called for troops. Arkansas left the Union on May 6 along with Tennessee one day later. North Carolina followed on May 20.

Not all residents of the border states and the Upper South wished to join the Confederacy, however. Pro-Union feelings remained strong in Tennessee, especially in the eastern part of the state where slaves were few and consisted largely of house servants owned by the wealthy. The state of Virginia—home of revolutionary leaders and presidents such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe—literally was split on the issue of secession. Residents in the north and west of the state, where few slaveholders resided, rejected secession. These

counties subsequently united to form “West Virginia,” which entered the Union as a free state in 1863. The rest of Virginia, including the historic lands along the Chesapeake Bay that were home to such early American settlements as Jamestown and Williamsburg, joined the Confederacy. The addition of this area gave the Confederacy even greater hope and brought General Robert E. Lee, arguably the best military commander of the day, to their side. In addition, the secession of Virginia brought Washington, DC, perilously close to the Confederacy, and fears that the border state of Maryland would also join the CSA, thus trapping the U.S. capital within Confederate territories, plagued Lincoln.

The Confederacy also gained the backing of the Five Civilized Tribes, as they were called, in the Indian Territory. The Five Civilized Tribes comprised the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, Seminoles, and Cherokees. The tribes supported slavery and many members owned slaves. These Indian slaveholders, who had been forced from their lands in Georgia and elsewhere in the Deep South during the presidency of Andrew Jackson, now found unprecedented common cause with white slaveholders. The CSA even allowed them to send delegates to the Confederate Congress.

While most slaveholding states joined the Confederacy, four crucial slave states remained in the Union ([link](#)). Delaware, which was technically a slave state despite its tiny slave population, never voted to secede. Maryland, despite deep divisions, remained in the Union as well. Missouri became the site of vicious fighting and the home of pro-Confederate guerillas but never joined the Confederacy. Kentucky declared itself neutral, although that did little to stop the fighting that occurred within the state. In all, these four states deprived the Confederacy of key resources and soldiers.





This map illustrates the southern states that seceded from the Union and formed the Confederacy in 1861, at the outset of the Civil War.

## Section Summary

The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 proved to be a watershed event. While it did not cause the Civil War, it was the culmination of increasing tensions between the proslavery South and the antislavery North. Before Lincoln had even taken office, seven Deep South states had seceded from the Union to form the CSA, dedicated to maintaining racial slavery and white supremacy. Last-minute efforts to reach a compromise, such as the proposal by Senator Crittenden and the Corwin amendment, went nowhere. The time for compromise had come to an end. With the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, the Civil War began.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:



**Problem:**

Which of the following does *not* represent a goal of the Confederate States of America?

- A. to protect slavery from any effort to abolish it
- B. to protect the domestic slave trade
- C. to ensure that slavery would be allowed to spread into western territories
- D. to ensure that the international slave trade would be allowed to continue

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** Which was *not* a provision of the Crittenden Compromise?

- A. that the Five Civilized Tribes would be admitted into the Confederacy
- B. that the 36°30' line from the Missouri Compromise would be restored and extended
- C. that Congress would be prohibited from abolishing slavery where it already existed
- D. that the interstate slave trade would be allowed to continue

---

**Solution:**

A

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Why did the states of the Deep South secede from the Union sooner than the states of the Upper South and the border states?

---

**Solution:**

Slavery was more deeply entrenched in the Deep South than it was in the Upper South or the border states. The Deep South was home to larger numbers of both slaveholders and slaves. Pro-Union sentiment remained strong in parts of the Upper South and border states, particularly those areas with smaller populations of slaveholders.

**Glossary****Confederacy**

the new nation formed by the seceding southern states, also known as the Confederate States of America (CSA)

**Crittenden Compromise**

a compromise, suggested by Kentucky senator John Crittenden, that would restore the 36°30' line from the Missouri Compromise and extend it to the Pacific Ocean, allowing slavery to expand into the southwestern territories

**Fort Sumter**

a fort in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, where the Union garrison came under siege by Confederate forces in an attack on April 12, 1861, beginning the Civil War

## Chapter 14: 1863: The Changing Nature of the War

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by the term “total war” and provide examples
- Describe mobilization efforts in the North and the South
- Explain why 1863 was a pivotal year in the war

Wars have their own logic; they last far longer than anyone anticipates at the beginning of hostilities. As they drag on, the energy and zeal that marked the entry into warfare often wane, as losses increase and people on both sides suffer the tolls of war. The American Civil War is a case study of this characteristic of modern war.

Although Northerners and Southerners both anticipated that the battle between the Confederacy and the Union would be settled quickly, it soon became clear to all that there was no resolution in sight. The longer the war continued, the more it began to affect life in both the North and the South. Increased need for manpower, the issue of slavery, and the ongoing challenges of keeping the war effort going changed the way life on both sides as the conflict progressed.

### MASS MOBILIZATION

By late 1862, the course of the war had changed to take on the characteristics of **total war**, in which armies attempt to demoralize the enemy by both striking military targets and disrupting their opponent's ability to wage war through destruction of their resources. In this type of war, armies often make no distinction between civilian and military targets. Both the Union and Confederate forces moved toward total war, although neither side ever entirely abolished the distinction between military and civilian. Total war also requires governments to mobilize all resources, extending their reach into their citizens' lives as never before. Another reality of war that became apparent in 1862 and beyond was the influence of combat on the size and scope of government. Both the Confederacy and the Union governments had to continue to grow in order to manage the logistics of recruiting men and maintaining, feeding, and equipping an army.

## Confederate Mobilization

The Confederate government in Richmond, Virginia, exercised sweeping powers to ensure victory, in stark contradiction to the states' rights sentiments held by many Southern leaders. The initial emotional outburst of enthusiasm for war in the Confederacy waned, and the Confederate government instituted a military draft in April 1862. Under the terms of the draft, all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five would serve three years. The draft had a different effect on men of different socioeconomic classes. One loophole permitted men to hire substitutes instead of serving in the Confederate army. This provision favored the wealthy over the poor, and led to much resentment and resistance. Exercising its power over the states, the Confederate Congress denied state efforts to circumvent the draft.

In order to fund the war, the Confederate government also took over the South's economy. The government ran Southern industry and built substantial transportation and industrial infrastructure to make the weapons of war. Over the objections of slaveholders, it impressed slaves, seizing these workers from their owners and forcing them to work on fortifications and rail lines. Concerned about the resistance to and unhappiness with the government measures, in 1862, the Confederate Congress gave President Davis the power to suspend the writ of **habeas corpus**, the right of those arrested to be brought before a judge or court to determine whether there is cause to hold the prisoner. With a stated goal of bolstering national security in the fledgling republic, this change meant that the Confederacy could arrest and detain indefinitely any suspected enemy without giving a reason. This growth of the Confederate central government stood as a glaring contradiction to the earlier states' rights argument of pro-Confederate advocates.

The war efforts were costing the new nation dearly. Nevertheless, the Confederate Congress heeded the pleas of wealthy plantation owners and refused to place a tax on slaves or cotton, despite the Confederacy's desperate need for the revenue that such a tax would have raised. Instead, the Confederacy drafted a taxation plan that kept the Southern elite happy but in no way met the needs of the war. The government also resorted to printing immense amounts of paper money, which quickly led to runaway

inflation. Food prices soared, and poor, white Southerners faced starvation. In April 1863, thousands of hungry people rioted in Richmond, Virginia ([link](#)). Many of the rioters were mothers who could not feed their children. The riot ended when President Davis threatened to have Confederate forces open fire on the crowds.



Rampant inflation in the 1860s made food too expensive for many Southerners, leading to widespread starvation.

One of the reasons that the Confederacy was so economically devastated was its ill-advised gamble that cotton sales would continue during the war. The government had high hopes that Great Britain and France, which both used cotton as the raw material in their textile mills, would ensure the South's economic strength—and therefore victory in the war—by continuing to buy. Furthermore, the Confederate government hoped that

Great Britain and France would make loans to their new nation in order to ensure the continued flow of raw materials. These hopes were never realized. Great Britain in particular did not wish to risk war with the United States, which would have meant the invasion of Canada. The United States was also a major source of grain for Britain and an important purchaser of British goods. Furthermore, the blockade made Southern trade with Europe difficult. Instead, Great Britain, the major consumer of American cotton, found alternate sources in India and Egypt, leaving the South without the income or alliance it had anticipated.

Dissent within the Confederacy also affected the South's ability to fight the war. Confederate politicians disagreed over the amount of power that the central government should be allowed to exercise. Many states' rights advocates, who favored a weak central government and supported the sovereignty of individual states, resented President Davis's efforts to conscript troops, impose taxation to pay for the war, and requisition necessary resources. Governors in the Confederate states often proved reluctant to provide supplies or troops for the use of the Confederate government. Even Jefferson Davis's vice president Alexander Stephens opposed conscription, the seizure of slave property to work for the Confederacy, and suspension of habeas corpus. Class divisions also divided Confederates. Poor whites resented the ability of wealthy slaveholders to excuse themselves from military service. Racial tensions plagued the South as well. On those occasions when free blacks volunteered to serve in the Confederate army, they were turned away, and enslaved African Americans were regarded with fear and suspicion, as whites whispered among themselves about the possibility of slave insurrections.

## **Union Mobilization**

Mobilization for war proved to be easier in the North than it was in the South. During the war, the federal government in Washington, DC, like its Southern counterpart, undertook a wide range of efforts to ensure its victory over the Confederacy. To fund the war effort and finance the expansion of Union infrastructure, Republicans in Congress drastically expanded government activism, impacting citizens' everyday lives through measures

such as new types of taxation. The government also contracted with major suppliers of food, weapons, and other needed materials. Virtually every sector of the Northern economy became linked to the war effort.

In keeping with their longstanding objective of keeping slavery out of the newly settled western territories, the Republicans in Congress (the dominant party) passed several measures in 1862. First, the Homestead Act provided generous inducements for Northerners to relocate and farm in the West. Settlers could lay claim to 160 acres of federal land by residing on the property for five years and improving it. The act not only motivated free-labor farmers to move west, but it also aimed to increase agricultural output for the war effort. The federal government also turned its attention to creating a transcontinental railroad to facilitate the movement of people and goods across the country. Congress chartered two companies, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, and provided generous funds for these two businesses to connect the country by rail.

The Republican emphasis on free labor, rather than slave labor, also influenced the 1862 Land Grant College Act, commonly known as the Morrill Act after its author, Vermont Republican senator Justin Smith Morrill. The measure provided for the creation of agricultural colleges, funded through federal grants, to teach the latest agricultural techniques. Each state in the Union would be granted thirty thousand acres of federal land for the use of these institutions of higher education.

Congress paid for the war using several strategies. They levied a tax on the income of the wealthy, as well as a tax on all inheritances. They also put high tariffs in place. Finally, they passed two National Bank Acts, one in 1863 and one in 1864, calling on the U.S. Treasury to issue war bonds and on Union banks to buy the bonds. A Union campaign to convince individuals to buy the bonds helped increase sales. The Republicans also passed the Legal Tender Act of 1862, calling for paper money—known as **greenbacks**—to be printed ([link](#)). Some \$150 million worth of greenbacks became legal tender, and the Northern economy boomed, although high inflation also resulted.



The Union began printing these paper “greenbacks” to use as legal tender as one of its strategies for funding the war effort.

Like the Confederacy, the Union turned to conscription to provide the troops needed for the war. In March 1863, Congress passed the Enrollment Act, requiring all unmarried men between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, and all married men between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five—including immigrants who had filed for citizenship—to register with the Union to fight in the Civil War. All who registered were subject to military service, and draftees were selected by a lottery system ([\[link\]](#)). As in the South, a loophole in the law allowed individuals to hire substitutes if they could afford it. Others could avoid enlistment by paying \$300 to the federal government. In keeping with the Supreme Court decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, African Americans were not citizens and were therefore exempt from the draft.





(a)



(b)

The Union tried to provide additional incentives for soldiers, in the form of bounties, to enlist without waiting for the draft, as shown in recruitment posters (a) and (b).

Like the Confederacy, the Union also took the step of suspending habeas corpus rights, so those suspected of pro-Confederate sympathies could be arrested and held without being given the reason. Lincoln had selectively suspended the writ of habeas corpus in the slave state of Maryland, home to many Confederate sympathizers, in 1861 and 1862, in an effort to ensure that the Union capital would be safe. In March 1863, he signed into law the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, giving him the power to detain suspected Confederate operatives throughout the Union. The Lincoln administration also closed down three hundred newspapers as a national security measure during the war.

In both the North and the South, the Civil War dramatically increased the power of the belligerent governments. Breaking all past precedents in American history, both the Confederacy and the Union employed the power of their central governments to mobilize resources and citizens.

## **Women's Mobilization**

As men on both sides mobilized for the war, so did women. In both the North and the South, women were forced to take over farms and businesses abandoned by their husbands as they left for war. Women organized themselves into ladies' aid societies to sew uniforms, knit socks, and raise money to purchase necessities for the troops. In the South, women took wounded soldiers into their homes to nurse. In the North, women volunteered for the United States Sanitary Commission, which formed in June 1861. They inspected military camps with the goal of improving cleanliness and reducing the number of soldiers who died from disease, the most common cause of death in the war. They also raised money to buy medical supplies and helped with the injured. Other women found jobs in the Union army as cooks and laundresses. Thousands volunteered to care for the sick and wounded in response to a call by reformer Dorothea Dix, who was placed in charge of the Union army's nurses. According to rumor, Dix sought respectable women over the age of thirty who were "plain almost to repulsion in dress" and thus could be trusted not to form romantic liaisons with soldiers. Women on both sides also acted as spies and, disguised as men, engaged in combat.

## **EMANCIPATION**

Early in the war, President Lincoln approached the issue of slavery cautiously. While he disapproved of slavery personally, he did not believe that he had the authority to abolish it. Furthermore, he feared that making the abolition of slavery an objective of the war would cause the border slave states to join the Confederacy. His one objective in 1861 and 1862 was to restore the Union.

### **Note:**

#### **Lincoln's Evolving Thoughts on Slavery**

President Lincoln wrote the following letter to newspaper editor Horace Greeley on August 22, 1862. In it, Lincoln states his position on slavery, which is notable for being a middle-of-the-road stance. Lincoln's later

public speeches on the issue take the more strident antislavery tone for which he is remembered.

"I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save Slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy Slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy Slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about Slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save this Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men, everywhere, could be free. Yours, A. LINCOLN."

How would you characterize Lincoln's public position in August 1862? What was he prepared to do for slaves, and under what conditions?

Since the beginning of the war, thousands of slaves had fled to the safety of Union lines. In May 1861, Union general Benjamin Butler and others labeled these refugees from slavery **contrabands**. Butler reasoned that since Southern states had left the United States, he was not obliged to follow federal fugitive slave laws. Slaves who made it through the Union lines were shielded by the U.S. military and not returned to slavery. The intent was not only to assist slaves but also to deprive the South of a valuable source of manpower.

Congress began to define the status of these ex-slaves in 1861 and 1862. In August 1861, legislators approved the Confiscation Act of 1861, empowering the Union to seize property, including slaves, used by the Confederacy. The Republican-dominated Congress took additional steps, abolishing slavery in Washington, DC, in April 1862. Congress passed a second Confiscation Act in July 1862, which extended freedom to runaway slaves and those captured by Union armies. In that month, Congress also addressed the issue of slavery in the West, banning the practice in the territories. This federal law made the 1846 Wilmot Proviso and the dreams of the Free-Soil Party a reality. However, even as the Union government took steps to aid individual slaves and to limit the practice of slavery, it passed no measure to address the institution of slavery as a whole.

Lincoln moved slowly and cautiously on the issue of abolition. His primary concern was the cohesion of the Union and the bringing of the Southern states back into the fold. However, as the war dragged on and many thousands of contrabands made their way north, Republicans in Congress continued to call for the end of slavery. Throughout his political career, Lincoln's plans for former slaves had been to send them to Liberia. As late as August 1862, he had hoped to interest African Americans in building a colony for former slaves in Central America, an idea that found favor neither with black leaders nor with abolitionists, and thus was abandoned by Lincoln. Responding to Congressional demands for an end to slavery, Lincoln presented an ultimatum to the Confederates on September 22, 1862, shortly after the Confederate retreat at Antietam. He gave the Confederate states until January 1, 1863, to rejoin the Union. If they did, slavery would continue in the slave states. If they refused to rejoin, however, the war would continue and all slaves would be freed at its conclusion. The Confederacy took no action. It had committed itself to maintaining its independence and had no interest in the president's ultimatum.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln made good on his promise and signed the **Emancipation Proclamation**. It stated "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then,

thenceforward, and forever free.” The proclamation did not immediately free the slaves in the Confederate states. Although they were in rebellion against the United States, the lack of the Union army’s presence in such areas meant that the president’s directive could not be enforced. The proclamation also did not free slaves in the border states, because these states were not, by definition, in rebellion. Lincoln relied on his powers as commander-in-chief in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. He knew the proclamation could be easily challenged in court, but by excluding the territories still outside his control, slaveholders and slave governments could not sue him. Moreover, slave states in the Union, such as Kentucky, could not sue because the proclamation did not apply to them. Slaveholders in Kentucky knew full well that if the institution were abolished throughout the South, it would not survive in a handful of border territories. Despite the limits of the proclamation, Lincoln dramatically shifted the objective of the war increasingly toward ending slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation became a monumental step forward on the road to changing the character of the United States.

**Note:**

Read through the full text of the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) at the National Archives website.

The proclamation generated quick and dramatic reactions. The news created euphoria among slaves, as it signaled the eventual end of their bondage. Predictably, Confederate leaders raged against the proclamation, reinforcing their commitment to fight to maintain slavery, the foundation of the Confederacy. In the North, opinions split widely on the issue. Abolitionists praised Lincoln’s actions, which they saw as the fulfillment of their long campaign to strike down an immoral institution. But other Northerners, especially Irish, working-class, urban dwellers loyal to the Democratic Party and others with racist beliefs, hated the new goal of emancipation and found the idea of freed slaves repugnant. At its core, much of this racism had an economic foundation: Many Northerners feared competing with emancipated slaves for scarce jobs.

In New York City, the Emancipation Proclamation, combined with unhappiness over the Union draft, which began in March 1863, fanned the flames of white racism. Many New Yorkers supported the Confederacy for business reasons, and, in 1861, the city's mayor actually suggested that New York City leave the Union. On July 13, 1863, two days after the first draft lottery took place, this racial hatred erupted into violence. A volunteer fire company whose commander had been drafted initiated a riot, and the violence spread quickly across the city. The rioters chose targets associated either with the Union army or with African Americans. An armory was destroyed, as was a Brooks Brothers' store, which supplied uniforms to the army. White mobs attacked and killed black New Yorkers and destroyed an African American orphanage ([link](#)). On the fourth day of the riots, federal troops dispatched by Lincoln arrived in the city and ended the violence. Millions of dollars in property had been destroyed. More than one hundred people died, approximately one thousand were left injured, and about one-fifth of the city's African American population fled New York in fear.



The race riots in New York showed just how divided the North was on the issue of equality, even as the North went to war with the South over the issue of slavery.



## UNION ADVANCES

The war in the west continued in favor of the North in 1863. At the start of the year, Union forces controlled much of the Mississippi River. In the spring and summer of 1862, they had captured New Orleans—the most important port in the Confederacy, through which cotton harvested from all the Southern states was exported—and Memphis. Grant had then attempted to capture Vicksburg, Mississippi, a commercial center on the bluffs above the Mississippi River. Once Vicksburg fell, the Union would have won complete control over the river. A military bombardment that summer failed to force a Confederate surrender. An assault by land forces also failed in December 1862.

In April 1863, the Union began a final attempt to capture Vicksburg. On July 3, after more than a month of a Union siege, during which Vicksburg's residents hid in caves to protect themselves from the bombardment and ate their pets to stay alive, Grant finally achieved his objective. The trapped Confederate forces surrendered. The Union had succeeded in capturing Vicksburg and splitting the Confederacy ([link](#)). This victory inflicted a serious blow to the Southern war effort.



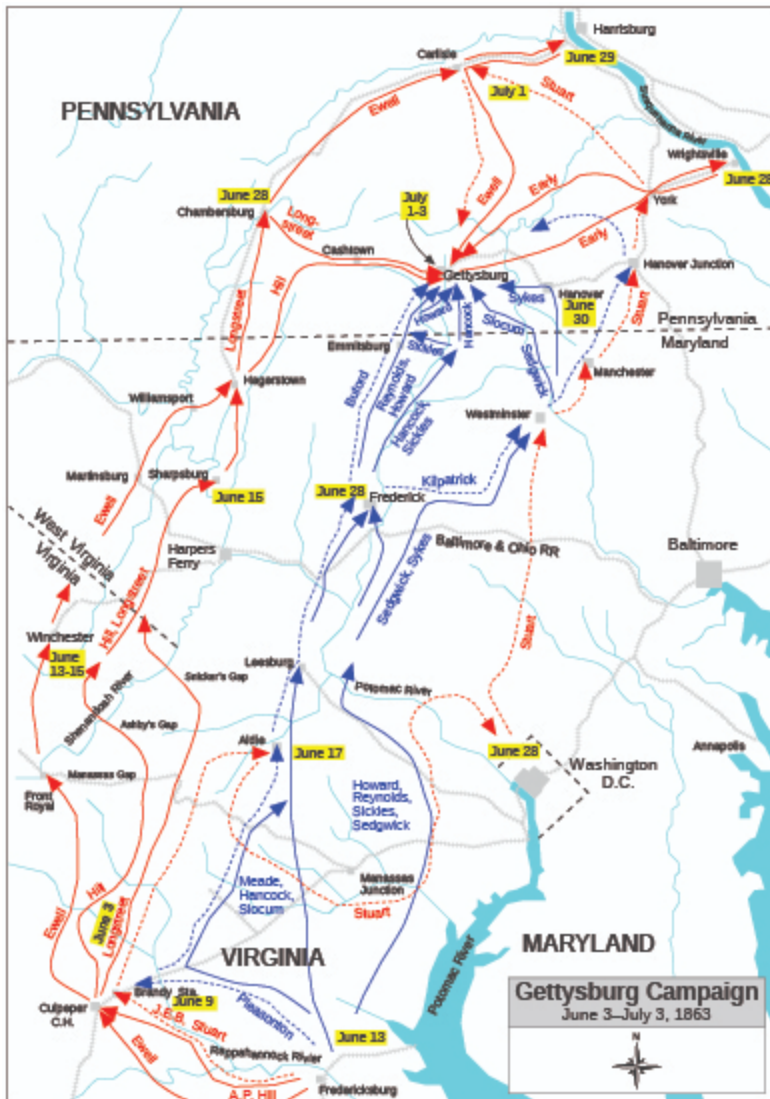
In this illustration, Union gun boats fire on Vicksburg in the campaign that helped the

## Union take control of the Mississippi River.

As Grant and his forces pounded Vicksburg, Confederate strategists, at the urging of General Lee, who had defeated a larger Union army at Chancellorsville, Virginia, in May 1863, decided on a bold plan to invade the North. Leaders hoped this invasion would force the Union to send troops engaged in the Vicksburg campaign east, thus weakening their power over the Mississippi. Further, they hoped the aggressive action of pushing north would weaken the Union's resolve to fight. Lee also hoped that a significant Confederate victory in the North would convince Great Britain and France to extend support to Jefferson Davis's government and encourage the North to negotiate peace.

Beginning in June 1863, General Lee began to move the Army of Northern Virginia north through Maryland. The Union army—the Army of the Potomac—traveled east to end up alongside the Confederate forces. The two armies met at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where Confederate forces had gone to secure supplies. The resulting battle lasted three days, July 1–3 ([link](#)) and remains the biggest and costliest battle ever fought in North America. The climax of the Battle of Gettysburg occurred on the third day. In the morning, after a fight lasting several hours, Union forces fought back a Confederate attack on Culp's Hill, one of the Union's defensive positions. To regain a perceived advantage and secure victory, Lee ordered a frontal assault, known as Pickett's Charge (for Confederate general George Pickett), against the center of the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. Approximately fifteen thousand Confederate soldiers took part, and more than half lost their lives, as they advanced nearly a mile across an open field to attack the entrenched Union forces. In all, more than a third of the Army of Northern Virginia had been lost, and on the evening of July 4, Lee and his men slipped away in the rain. General George Meade did not pursue them. Both sides suffered staggering losses. Total casualties numbered around twenty-three thousand for the Union and some twenty-eight thousand among the Confederates. With its defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, both on the same day, the Confederacy lost its momentum. The tide had turned in favor of the Union in both the east and the west.





As this map indicates, the battlefield at Gettysburg was the farthest north that the Confederate army advanced. (credit: Hal Jespersen)

Following the Battle of Gettysburg, the bodies of those who had fallen were hastily buried. Attorney David Wills, a resident of Gettysburg, campaigned for the creation of a national cemetery on the site of the battlefield, and the governor of Pennsylvania tasked him with creating it. President Lincoln was invited to attend the cemetery's dedication. After the featured orator

had delivered a two-hour speech, Lincoln addressed the crowd for several minutes. In his speech, known as the **Gettysburg Address**, which he had finished writing while a guest in David Wills' home the day before the dedication, Lincoln invoked the Founding Fathers and the spirit of the American Revolution. The Union soldiers who had died at Gettysburg, he proclaimed, had died not only to preserve the Union, but also to guarantee freedom and equality for all.

**Note:**

**Lincoln's Gettysburg Address**

Several months after the battle at Gettysburg, Lincoln traveled to Pennsylvania and, speaking to an audience at the dedication of the new Soldiers' National Cemetery near the site of the battle, he delivered his now-famous Gettysburg Address to commemorate the turning point of the war and the soldiers whose sacrifices had made it possible. The two-minute speech was politely received at the time, although press reactions split along party lines. Upon receiving a letter of congratulations from Massachusetts politician and orator William Everett, whose speech at the ceremony had lasted for two hours, Lincoln said he was glad to know that his brief address, now virtually immortal, was not "a total failure."

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this." "It is for us the living . . . to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

—Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863"

What did Lincoln mean by “a new birth of freedom”? What did he mean when he said “a government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”?

**Note:**

Acclaimed filmmaker Ken Burns has created a [documentary](#) about a small boys’ school in Vermont where students memorize the Gettysburg Address. It explores the value the address has in these boys’ lives, and why the words still matter.

## Section Summary

The year 1863 proved decisive in the Civil War for two major reasons. First, the Union transformed the purpose of the struggle from restoring the Union to ending slavery. While Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation actually succeeded in freeing few slaves, it made freedom for African Americans a cause of the Union. Second, the tide increasingly turned against the Confederacy. The success of the Vicksburg Campaign had given the Union control of the Mississippi River, and Lee’s defeat at Gettysburg had ended the attempted Confederate invasion of the North.

## Review Questions

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Which of the following did the North *not* do to mobilize for war?

- A. institute a military draft
  - B. form a military alliance with Great Britain
  - C. print paper money
  - D. pass the Homestead Act
-

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** Why is 1863 considered a turning point in the Civil War?

---

**Solution:**

At the beginning of 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves in areas under rebellion. This changed the war from one in which the North fought to preserve the Union to one in which it fought to free enslaved African Americans. On the battlefield, Union forces led by Grant captured Vicksburg, Mississippi, splitting the Confederacy in two and depriving it of a major avenue of transportation. In the east, General Meade stopped a Confederate invasion of the North at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

## Glossary

contrabands

slaves who escaped to the Union army's lines

Emancipation Proclamation

signed on January 1, 1863, the document with which President Lincoln transformed the Civil War into a struggle to end slavery

Gettysburg Address

a speech by Abraham Lincoln dedicating the military cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863

greenbacks

paper money the United States began to issue during the Civil War

habeas corpus

the right of those arrested to be brought before a judge or court to determine whether there is cause to hold the prisoner

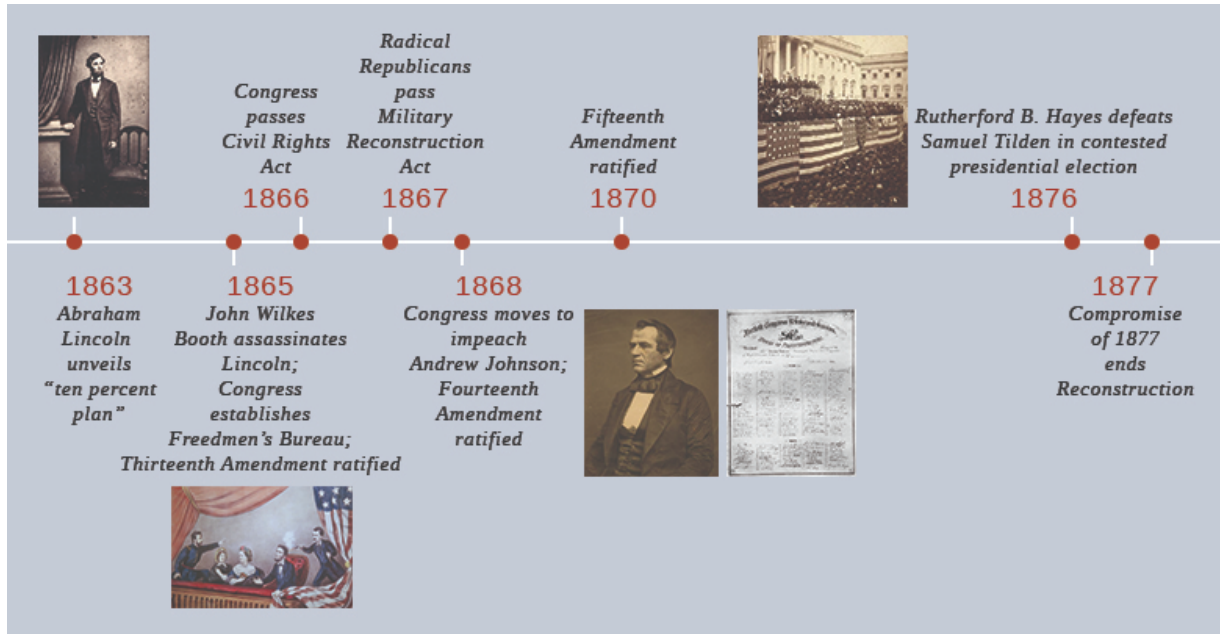
total war

a state of war in which the government makes no distinction between military and civilian targets, and mobilizes all resources, extending its reach into all areas of citizens' lives

## Chapter 15: Restoring the Union

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe Lincoln's plan to restore the Union at the end of the Civil War
- Discuss the tenets of Radical Republicanism
- Analyze the success or failure of the Thirteenth Amendment



The end of the Civil War saw the beginning of the **Reconstruction** era, when former rebel Southern states were integrated back into the Union. President Lincoln moved quickly to achieve the war's ultimate goal: reunification of the country. He proposed a generous and non-punitive plan to return the former Confederate states speedily to the United States, but some Republicans in Congress protested, considering the president's plan too lenient to the rebel states that had torn the country apart. The greatest flaw of Lincoln's plan, according to this view, was that it appeared to forgive traitors instead of guaranteeing civil rights to former slaves. President Lincoln oversaw the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, but he did not live to see its ratification.

### THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN

From the outset of the rebellion in 1861, Lincoln's overriding goal had been to bring the Southern states quickly back into the fold in order to restore the Union ([link](#)). In early December 1863, the president began the process of reunification by unveiling a three-part proposal known as the **ten percent plan** that outlined how the states would return. The ten percent plan gave a general pardon to all Southerners except high-ranking Confederate government and military leaders; required 10 percent of the 1860 voting population in the former rebel states to take a binding oath of future allegiance to the United States and the emancipation of slaves; and declared that once those voters took those oaths, the restored Confederate states would draft new state constitutions.



(a)



(b)

Thomas Le Mere took this albumen silver print (a) of Abraham Lincoln in April 1863. Le Mere thought a standing pose of Lincoln would be popular. In this political cartoon from 1865 (b), Lincoln and his vice president, Andrew Johnson, endeavor to sew together the torn pieces of the Union.

Lincoln hoped that the leniency of the plan—90 percent of the 1860 voters did not have to swear allegiance to the Union or to emancipation—would bring about a quick and long-anticipated resolution and make emancipation more acceptable everywhere. This approach appealed to some in the moderate wing of the Republican Party, which wanted to put the nation on a speedy course toward reconciliation. However, the proposal instantly drew fire from a larger faction of Republicans in Congress who did not want to deal moderately with the South. These members of Congress, known as **Radical Republicans**, wanted to remake the South and punish the rebels. Radical Republicans insisted on harsh terms for the defeated Confederacy and protection for former slaves, going far beyond what the president proposed.

In February 1864, two of the Radical Republicans, Ohio senator Benjamin Wade and Maryland representative Henry Winter Davis, answered Lincoln with a proposal of their own. Among other stipulations, the Wade-Davis Bill called for a majority of voters and government officials in Confederate states to take an oath, called the **Ironclad Oath**, swearing that they had never supported the Confederacy or made war against the United States. Those who could not or would not take the oath would be unable to take part in the future political life of the South. Congress assented to the Wade-Davis Bill, and it went to Lincoln for his signature. The president refused to sign, using the pocket veto (that is, taking no action) to kill the bill. Lincoln understood that no Southern state would have met the criteria of the Wade-Davis Bill, and its passage would simply have delayed the reconstruction of the South.

## **THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT**

Despite the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, the legal status of slaves and the institution of slavery remained unresolved. To deal with the remaining uncertainties, the Republican Party made the abolition of slavery a top priority by including the issue in its 1864 party platform. The platform read: “That as slavery was the cause, and now constitutes the strength of this



Rebellion, and as it must be, always and everywhere, hostile to the principles of Republican Government, justice and the National safety demand its utter and complete extirpation from the soil of the Republic; and that, while we uphold and maintain the acts and proclamations by which the Government, in its own defense, has aimed a deathblow at this gigantic evil, we are in favor, furthermore, of such an amendment to the Constitution, to be made by the people in conformity with its provisions, as shall terminate and forever prohibit the existence of Slavery within the limits of the jurisdiction of the United States.” The platform left no doubt about the intention to abolish slavery.

The president, along with the Radical Republicans, made good on this campaign promise in 1864 and 1865. A proposed constitutional amendment passed the Senate in April 1864, and the House of Representatives concurred in January 1865. The amendment then made its way to the states, where it swiftly gained the necessary support, including in the South. In December 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment was officially ratified and added to the Constitution. The first amendment added to the Constitution since 1804, it overturned a centuries-old practice by permanently abolishing slavery.

**Note:**

Explore a comprehensive collection of documents, images, and ephemera related to [Abraham Lincoln](#) on the Library of Congress website.

President Lincoln never saw the final ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. On April 14, 1865, the Confederate supporter and well-known actor John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln while he was attending a play, *Our American Cousin*, at Ford’s Theater in Washington. The president died the next day ([\[link\]](#)). Booth had steadfastly defended the Confederacy and white supremacy, and his act was part of a larger conspiracy to eliminate the heads of the Union government and keep the Confederate fight going. One of Booth’s associates stabbed and wounded Secretary of State William Seward the night of the assassination. Another associate abandoned the

planned assassination of Vice President Andrew Johnson at the last moment. Although Booth initially escaped capture, Union troops shot and killed him on April 26, 1865, in a Maryland barn. Eight other conspirators were convicted by a military tribunal for participating in the conspiracy, and four were hanged. Lincoln's death earned him immediate martyrdom, and hysteria spread throughout the North. To many Northerners, the assassination suggested an even greater conspiracy than what was revealed, masterminded by the unrepentant leaders of the defeated Confederacy. Militant Republicans would use and exploit this fear relentlessly in the ensuing months.



In *The Assassination of President Lincoln* (1865), by Currier and Ives, John Wilkes Booth shoots Lincoln in the back of the head as he sits in the theater box with his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, and their guests, Major Henry R. Rathbone and Clara Harris.

## **ANDREW JOHNSON AND THE BATTLE OVER RECONSTRUCTION**

Lincoln's assassination elevated Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, to the presidency. Johnson had come from very humble origins. Born into extreme poverty in North Carolina and having never attended school, Johnson was the picture of a self-made man. His wife had taught him how to read and he had worked as a tailor, a trade he had been apprenticed to as a child. In Tennessee, where he had moved as a young man, he gradually rose up the political ladder, earning a reputation for being a skillful stump speaker and a staunch defender of poor southerners. He was elected to serve in the House of Representatives in the 1840s, became governor of Tennessee the following decade, and then was elected a U.S. senator just a few years before the country descended into war. When Tennessee seceded, Johnson remained loyal to the Union and stayed in the Senate. As Union troops marched on his home state of North Carolina, Lincoln appointed him governor of the then-occupied state of Tennessee, where he served until being nominated by the Republicans to run for vice president on a Lincoln ticket. The nomination of Johnson, a Democrat and a slaveholding southerner, was a pragmatic decision made by concerned Republicans. It was important for them to show that the party supported all loyal men, regardless of their origin or political persuasion. Johnson appeared an ideal choice, because his nomination would bring with it the support of both pro-Southern elements and the War Democrats who rejected the conciliatory stance of the Copperheads, the northern Democrats who opposed the Civil War.

Unexpectedly elevated to the presidency in 1865, this formerly impoverished tailor's apprentice and unwavering antagonist of the wealthy southern planter class now found himself tasked with administering the restoration of a destroyed South. Lincoln's position as president had been that the secession of the Southern states was never legal; that is, they had not succeeded in leaving the Union, therefore they still had certain rights to self-government as states. In keeping with Lincoln's plan, Johnson desired to quickly reincorporate the South back into the Union on lenient terms and heal the wounds of the nation. This position angered many in his own party. The northern Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction looked to

overturn southern society and specifically aimed at ending the plantation system. President Johnson quickly disappointed Radical Republicans when he rejected their idea that the federal government could provide voting rights for freed slaves. The initial disagreements between the president and the Radical Republicans over how best to deal with the defeated South set the stage for further conflict.

In fact, President Johnson's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction in May 1865 provided sweeping "amnesty and pardon" to rebellious Southerners. It returned to them their property, with the notable exception of their former slaves, and it asked only that they affirm their support for the Constitution of the United States. Those Southerners exempted from this amnesty included the Confederate political leadership, high-ranking military officers, and persons with taxable property worth more than \$20,000. The inclusion of this last category was specifically designed to make it clear to the southern planter class that they had a unique responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities. But it also satisfied Johnson's desire to exact vengeance on a class of people he had fought politically for much of his life. For this class of wealthy Southerners to regain their rights, they would have to swallow their pride and request a personal pardon from Johnson himself.

For the Southern states, the requirements for readmission to the Union were also fairly straightforward. States were required to hold individual state conventions where they would repeal the ordinances of secession and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. By the end of 1865, a number of former Confederate leaders were in the Union capital looking to claim their seats in Congress. Among them was Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy, who had spent several months in a Boston jail after the war. Despite the outcries of Republicans in Congress, by early 1866 Johnson announced that all former Confederate states had satisfied the necessary requirements. According to him, nothing more needed to be done; the Union had been restored.

Understandably, Radical Republicans in Congress did not agree with Johnson's position. They, and their northern constituents, greatly resented his lenient treatment of the former Confederate states, and especially the

return of former Confederate leaders like Alexander Stephens to Congress. They refused to acknowledge the southern state governments he allowed. As a result, they would not permit senators and representatives from the former Confederate states to take their places in Congress.

Instead, the Radical Republicans created a joint committee of representatives and senators to oversee Reconstruction. In the 1866 congressional elections, they gained control of the House, and in the ensuing years they pushed for the dismantling of the old southern order and the complete reconstruction of the South. This effort put them squarely at odds with President Johnson, who remained unwilling to compromise with Congress, setting the stage for a series of clashes.

## **Section Summary**

President Lincoln worked to reach his goal of reunifying the nation quickly and proposed a lenient plan to reintegrate the Confederate states. After his murder in 1865, Lincoln's vice president, Andrew Johnson, sought to reconstitute the Union quickly, pardoning Southerners en masse and providing Southern states with a clear path back to readmission. By 1866, Johnson announced the end of Reconstruction. Radical Republicans in Congress disagreed, however, and in the years ahead would put forth their own plan of Reconstruction.

## **Review Questions**

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

What was Lincoln's primary goal immediately following the Civil War?

- A. punishing the rebel states
- B. improving the lives of former slaves
- C. reunifying the country
- D. paying off the debts of the war

---

**Solution:**

C

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

In 1864 and 1865, Radical Republicans were most concerned with \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. securing civil rights for freed slaves
- B. barring ex-Confederates from political office
- C. seeking restitution from Confederate states
- D. preventing Andrew Johnson's ascent to the presidency

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What was the purpose of the Thirteenth Amendment? How was it different from the Emancipation Proclamation?

---

**Solution:**

The Thirteenth Amendment officially and permanently banned the institution of slavery in the United States. The Emancipation Proclamation had freed only those slaves in rebellious states, leaving many slaves—most notably, those in the border states—in bondage; furthermore, it did not alter or prohibit the institution of slavery in general.

**Glossary**

### Ironclad Oath

an oath that the Wade-Davis Bill required a majority of voters and government officials in Confederate states to take; it involved swearing that they had never supported the Confederacy

### Radical Republicans

northern Republicans who contested Lincoln's treatment of Confederate states and proposed harsher punishments

### Reconstruction

the twelve-year period after the Civil War in which the rebel Southern states were integrated back into the Union

### ten percent plan

Lincoln's Reconstruction plan, which required only 10 percent of the 1860 voters in Confederate states to take an oath of allegiance to the Union

## Chapter 16: The Union Triumphant

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the reasons why many Americans doubted that Abraham Lincoln would be reelected
- Explain how the Union forces overpowered the Confederacy

By the outset of 1864, after three years of war, the Union had mobilized its resources for the ongoing struggle on a massive scale. The government had overseen the construction of new railroad lines and for the first time used standardized rail tracks that allowed the North to move men and materials with greater ease. The North's economy had shifted to a wartime model. The Confederacy also mobilized, perhaps to a greater degree than the Union, its efforts to secure independence and maintain slavery. Yet the Confederacy experienced ever-greater hardships after years of war. Without the population of the North, it faced a shortage of manpower. The lack of industry, compared to the North, undercut the ability to sustain and wage war. Rampant inflation as well as food shortages in the South lowered morale.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE**

From the beginning of the war, the Confederacy placed great hope in being recognized and supported by Great Britain and France. European intervention in the conflict remained a strong possibility, but when it did occur, it was not in a way anticipated by either the Confederacy or the Union.

Napoleon III of France believed the Civil War presented an opportunity for him to restore a French empire in the Americas. With the United States preoccupied, the time seemed ripe for action. Napoleon's target was Mexico, and in 1861, a large French fleet took Veracruz. The French then moved to capture Mexico City, but the advance came to an end when Mexican forces defeated the French in 1862. Despite this setback, France eventually did conquer Mexico, establishing a regime that lasted until 1867. Rather than coming to the aid of the Confederacy, France used the Civil



War to provide a pretext for efforts to reestablish its former eighteenth-century colonial holdings.

Still, the Confederacy had great confidence that it would find an ally in Great Britain despite the antislavery sentiment there. Southerners hoped Britain's dependence on cotton for its textile mills would keep the country on their side. The fact that the British proved willing to build and sell ironclad ships intended to smash through the Union naval blockade further raised Southern hopes. The Confederacy purchased two of these armored blockade runners, the CSS *Florida* and the CSS *Alabama*. Both were destroyed during the war.

The Confederacy's staunch commitment to slavery eventually worked against British recognition and support, since Great Britain had abolished slavery in 1833. The 1863 Emancipation Proclamation ended any doubts the British had about the goals of the Union cause. In the aftermath of the proclamation, many in Great Britain cheered for a Union victory. Ultimately, Great Britain, like France, disappointed the Confederacy's hope of an alliance, leaving the outnumbered and out-resourced states that had left the Union to fend for themselves.

## **AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS**

At the beginning of the war, in 1861 and 1862, Union forces had used contrabands, or escaped slaves, for manual labor. The Emancipation Proclamation, however, led to the enrollment of African American men as Union soldiers. Huge numbers, former slaves as well as free blacks from the North, enlisted, and by the end of the war in 1865, their numbers had swelled to over 190,000. Racism among whites in the Union army ran deep, however, fueling the belief that black soldiers could never be effective or trustworthy. The Union also feared for the fate of captured black soldiers. Although many black soldiers saw combat duty, these factors affected the types of tasks assigned to them. Many black regiments were limited to hauling supplies, serving as cooks, digging trenches, and doing other types of labor, rather than serving on the battlefield ([link](#)).



This 1865 daguerreotype illustrates three of the Union's distinct advantages: African American soldiers, a stream of cannons and supplies, and an extensive railroad grid.  
(credit: Library of Congress)

African American soldiers also received lower wages than their white counterparts: ten dollars per month, with three dollars deducted for clothing. White soldiers, in contrast, received thirteen dollars monthly, with no deductions. Abolitionists and their Republican supporters in Congress worked to correct this discriminatory practice, and in 1864, black soldiers began to receive the same pay as white soldiers plus retroactive pay to 1863 ([link](#)).



African American and white soldiers of the Union army pose together in this photograph, although in reality, black soldiers were often kept separate and given only menial jobs.

For their part, African American soldiers welcomed the opportunity to prove themselves. Some 85 percent were former slaves who were fighting for the liberation of all slaves and the end of slavery. When given the opportunity to serve, many black regiments did so heroically. One such regiment, the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, distinguished itself at Fort Wagner in South Carolina by fighting valiantly against an entrenched Confederate position. They willingly gave their lives for the cause.

The Confederacy, not surprisingly, showed no mercy to African American troops. In April 1864, Southern forces attempted to take Fort Pillow in

Tennessee from the Union forces that had captured it in 1862. Confederate troops under Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the future founder of the Ku Klux Klan, quickly overran the fort, and the Union defenders surrendered. Instead of taking the African American soldiers prisoner, as they did the white soldiers, the Confederates executed them. The massacre outraged the North, and the Union refused to engage in any future exchanges of prisoners with the Confederacy.

## **THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1864 AND 1865**

In the final years of the war, the Union continued its efforts on both the eastern and western fronts while bringing the war into the Deep South. Union forces increasingly engaged in total war, not distinguishing between military and civilian targets. They destroyed everything that lay in their path, committed to breaking the will of the Confederacy and forcing an end to the war. General Grant, mastermind of the Vicksburg campaign, took charge of the war effort. He understood the advantage of having large numbers of soldiers at his disposal and recognized that Union soldiers could be replaced, whereas the Confederates, whose smaller population was feeling the strain of the years of war, could not. Grant thus pushed forward relentlessly, despite huge losses of men. In 1864, Grant committed his forces to destroying Lee's army in Virginia.

In the Virginia campaign, Grant hoped to use his larger army to his advantage. But at the Battle of the Wilderness, fought from May 5 to May 7, Confederate forces stopped Grant's advance. Rather than retreating, he pushed forward. At the Battle of Spotsylvania on May 8 through 12, Grant again faced determined Confederate resistance, and again his advance was halted. As before, he renewed the Union campaign. At the Battle of Cold Harbor in early June, Grant had between 100,000 and 110,000 soldiers, whereas the Confederates had slightly more than half that number. Again, the Union advance was halted, if only momentarily, as Grant awaited reinforcements. An attack on the Confederate position on June 3 resulted in heavy casualties for the Union, and nine days later, Grant led his army away from Cold Harbor to Petersburg, Virginia, a rail center that supplied Richmond. The immense losses that Grant's forces suffered severely hurt Union morale. The war seemed unending, and with the tremendous loss of

life, many in the North began to question the war and desire peace. Undaunted by the changing opinion in the North and hoping to destroy the Confederate rail network in the Upper South, however, Grant laid siege to Petersburg for nine months. As the months wore on, both sides dug in, creating miles of trenches and gun emplacements.

The other major Union campaigns of 1864 were more successful and gave President Lincoln the advantage that he needed to win reelection in November. In August 1864, the Union navy captured Mobile Bay. General Sherman invaded the Deep South, advancing slowly from Tennessee into Georgia, confronted at every turn by the Confederates, who were commanded by Johnston. When President Davis replaced Johnston with General John B. Hood, the Confederates made a daring but ultimately costly direct attack on the Union army that failed to drive out the invaders. Atlanta fell to Union forces on September 2, 1864. The fall of Atlanta held tremendous significance for the war-weary Union and helped to reverse the North's sinking morale. In keeping with the logic of total war, Sherman's forces cut a swath of destruction to Savannah. On **Sherman's March to the Sea**, the Union army, seeking to demoralize the South, destroyed everything in its path, despite strict instructions regarding the preservation of civilian property. Although towns were left standing, houses and barns were burned. Homes were looted, food was stolen, crops were destroyed, orchards were burned, and livestock was killed or confiscated. Savannah fell on December 21, 1864—a Christmas gift for Lincoln, Sherman proclaimed. In 1865, Sherman's forces invaded South Carolina, capturing Charleston and Columbia. In Columbia, the state capital, the Union army burned slaveholders' homes and destroyed much of the city. From South Carolina, Sherman's force moved north in an effort to join Grant and destroy Lee's army.

**Note:**

**Dolly Sumner Lunt on Sherman's March to the Sea**

The following account is by Dolly Sumner Lunt, a widow who ran her Georgia cotton plantation after the death of her husband. She describes General Sherman's march to Savannah, where he enacted the policy of

total war by burning and plundering the landscape to inhibit the Confederates' ability to keep fighting.

"Alas! little did I think while trying to save my house from plunder and fire that they were forcing my boys [slaves] from home at the point of the bayonet. One, Newton, jumped into bed in his cabin, and declared himself sick. Another crawled under the floor,—a lame boy he was,—but they pulled him out, placed him on a horse, and drove him off. Mid, poor Mid! The last I saw of him, a man had him going around the garden, looking, as I thought, for my sheep, as he was my shepherd. Jack came crying to me, the big tears coursing down his cheeks, saying they were making him go. I said: 'Stay in my room.'" "But a man followed in, cursing him and threatening to shoot him if he did not go; so poor Jack had to yield. . . ."

"Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind; they tore down my garden palings, made a road through my back-yard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home—wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it. . . ." "About ten o'clock they had all passed save one, who came in and wanted coffee made, which was done, and he, too, went on. A few minutes elapsed, and two couriers riding rapidly passed back. Then, presently, more soldiers came by, and this ended the passing of Sherman's army by my place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!"

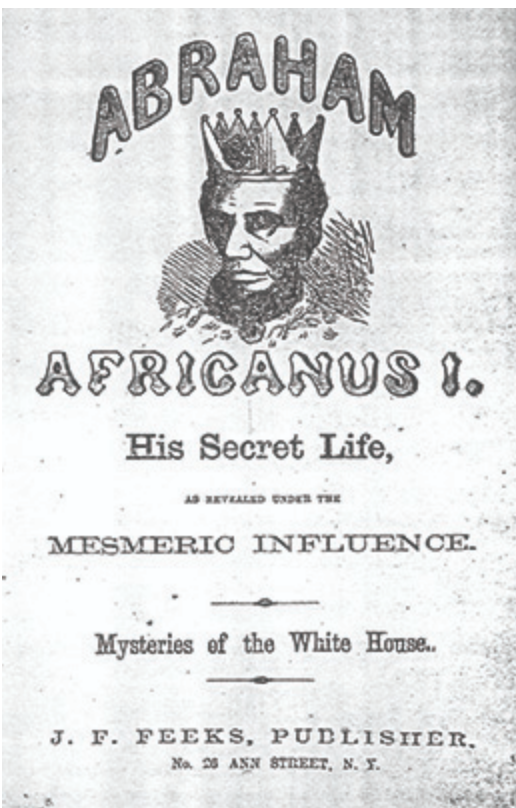
According to this account, what was the reaction of slaves to the arrival of the Union forces? What did the Union forces do with the slaves? For Lunt, did the strategy of total war work as planned?

## THE ELECTION OF 1864

Despite the military successes for the Union army in 1863, in 1864, Lincoln's status among many Northern voters plummeted. Citing the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, many saw him as a dictator, bent on grabbing power while senselessly and uncaringly drafting more young men into combat. Arguably, his greatest liability, however, was the

Emancipation Proclamation and the enlistment of African American soldiers. Many whites in the North found this deeply offensive, since they still believed in racial inequality. The 1863 New York City Draft Riots illustrated the depth of white anger.

Northern Democrats railed against Lincoln and the war. Republicans labeled these vocal opponents of the President **Copperheads**, a term that many antiwar Democrats accepted. As the anti-Lincoln poster below illustrates, his enemies tried to paint him as an untrustworthy and suspect leader ([link](#)). It seemed to most in the North that the Democratic candidate, General George B. McClellan, who did not support abolition and was replaced with another commander by Lincoln, would win the election.



Anti-Lincoln sentiment in the North ran high in 1864, and many believed he



would not be reelected  
president that year.

The Republican Party also split over the issue of reelecting Lincoln. Those who found him timid and indecisive, and favored extending full rights to African Americans, as well as completely refashioning the South after its defeat, earned the name Radicals. A moderate faction of Republicans opposed the Radicals. For his part, Lincoln did not align himself with either group.

The tide of the election campaign turned in favor of Lincoln, however, in the fall of 1864. Above all else, Union victories, including the fall of Atlanta in September and General Philip Sheridan's successes in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, bolstered Lincoln's popularity and his reelection bid. In November 1864, despite earlier forecasts to the contrary, Lincoln was reelected. Lincoln won all but three states—New Jersey and the border states of Delaware and Kentucky. To the chagrin of his opponent, McClellan, even Union army troops voted overwhelmingly for the incumbent President.

## **THE WAR ENDS**

By the spring of 1865, it had become clear to both sides that the Confederacy could not last much longer. Most of its major cities, ports, and industrial centers—Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Columbia, Mobile, New Orleans, and Memphis—had been captured. In April 1865, Lee had abandoned both Petersburg and Richmond. His goal in doing so was to unite his depleted army with Confederate forces commanded by General Johnston. Grant effectively cut him off. On April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia ([\[link\]](#)). By that time, he had fewer than 35,000 soldiers, while Grant had some 100,000. Meanwhile, Sherman's army proceeded to North Carolina, where General Johnston surrendered on April 19, 1865. The Civil War had come to an end. The war had cost the lives of more than 600,000 soldiers. Many more had been wounded. Thousands of women were left widowed. Children were left without fathers, and many parents were deprived of a source of support in



their old age. In some areas, where local volunteer units had marched off to battle, never to return, an entire generation of young women was left without marriage partners. Millions of dollars' worth of property had been destroyed, and towns and cities were laid to waste. With the conflict finally over, the very difficult work of reconciling North and South and reestablishing the United States lay ahead.



Vastly outnumbered by the Union army, the Confederate general Robert E. Lee (seated at the left) surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. (credit: "Alaskan Dude"/Wikimedia Commons)

## Section Summary

Having failed to win the support it expected from either Great Britain or France, the Confederacy faced a long war with limited resources and no allies. Lincoln won reelection in 1864, and continued to pursue the Union campaign, not only in the east and west, but also with a drive into the South under the leadership of General Sherman, whose March to the Sea through Georgia destroyed everything in its path. Cut off and outnumbered, Confederate general Lee surrendered to Union general Grant on April 9 at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Within days of Lee's surrender,

Confederate troops had lay down their arms, and the devastating war came to a close.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following is *not* a reason why many people opposed Lincoln's reelection in 1864?

- A. He appeared to have overstepped his authority by suspending the writ of habeas corpus.
- B. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation.
- C. He had replaced General George B. McClellan.
- D. He was seen as a power-hungry dictator.

---

#### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What was General Sherman's objective on his March to the Sea?

- A. to destroy military and civilian resources wherever possible
- B. to free black prisoners of war
- C. to join his army to that of General Grant
- D. to capture General Robert E. Lee

---

#### Solution:

A

## Critical Thinking Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Could the differences between the North and South have been worked out in late 1860 and 1861? Could war have been avoided? Provide evidence to support your answer.

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Why did the North prevail in the Civil War? What might have turned the tide of the war *against* the North?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

If you were in charge of the Confederate war effort, what strategy or strategies would you have pursued? Conversely, if you had to devise the Union strategy, what would you propose? How does your answer depend on your knowledge of how the war actually played out?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What do you believe to be the enduring qualities of the Gettysburg Address? Why has this two-minute speech so endured?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What role did women and African Americans play in the war?

## Glossary

Copperheads

Democrats who opposed Lincoln in the 1864 election

Sherman's March to the Sea

the scorched-earth campaign employed in Georgia by Union general  
William Tecumseh Sherman

## Chapter 17: Congress and the Remaking of the South, 1865–1866

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the efforts made by Congress in 1865 and 1866 to bring to life its vision of Reconstruction
- Explain how the Fourteenth Amendment transformed the Constitution

President Johnson and Congress's views on Reconstruction grew even further apart as Johnson's presidency progressed. Congress repeatedly pushed for greater rights for freed people and a far more thorough reconstruction of the South, while Johnson pushed for leniency and a swifter reintegration. President Johnson lacked Lincoln's political skills and instead exhibited a stubbornness and confrontational approach that aggravated an already difficult situation.

### THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

Freed people everywhere celebrated the end of slavery and immediately began to take steps to improve their own condition by seeking what had long been denied to them: land, financial security, education, and the ability to participate in the political process. They wanted to be reunited with family members, grasp the opportunity to make their own independent living, and exercise their right to have a say in their own government.

However, they faced the wrath of defeated but un-reconciled southerners who were determined to keep blacks an impoverished and despised underclass. Recognizing the widespread devastation in the South and the dire situation of freed people, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in March 1865, popularly known as the **Freedmen's Bureau**. Lincoln had approved of the bureau, giving it a charter for one year.

The Freedmen's Bureau engaged in many initiatives to ease the transition from slavery to freedom. It delivered food to blacks and whites alike in the South. It helped freed people gain labor contracts, a significant step in the creation of wage labor in place of slavery. It helped reunite families of freedmen, and it also devoted much energy to education, establishing scores

of public schools where freed people and poor whites could receive both elementary and higher education. Respected institutions such as Fisk University, Hampton University, and Dillard University are part of the legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau.

In this endeavor, the Freedmen's Bureau received support from Christian organizations that had long advocated for abolition, such as the American Missionary Association (AMA). The AMA used the knowledge and skill it had acquired while working in missions in Africa and with American Indian groups to establish and run schools for freed slaves in the postwar South. While men and women, white and black, taught in these schools, the opportunity was crucially important for participating women ([\[link\]](#)). At the time, many opportunities, including admission to most institutes of higher learning, remained closed to women. Participating in these schools afforded these women the opportunities they otherwise may have been denied. Additionally, the fact they often risked life and limb to work in these schools in the South demonstrated to the nation that women could play a vital role in American civic life.



The Freedmen's Bureau, as shown in this 1866 illustration from *Frank Leslie's*

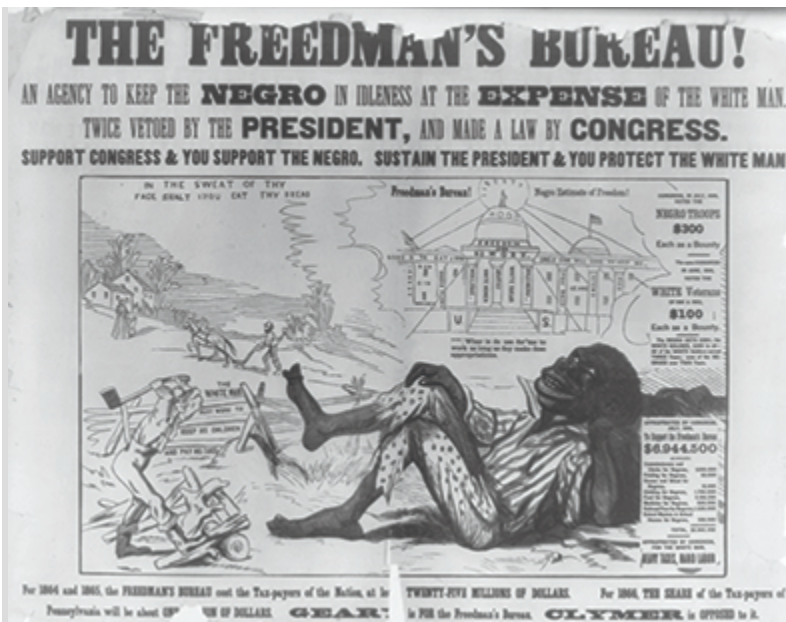
*Illustrated Newspaper*, created many schools for black elementary school students. Many of the teachers who provided instruction in these southern schools, though by no means all, came from northern states.

The schools that the Freedmen's Bureau and the AMA established inspired great dismay and resentment among the white populations in the South and were sometimes targets of violence. Indeed, the Freedmen's Bureau's programs and its very existence were sources of controversy. Racists and others who resisted this type of federal government activism denounced it as both a waste of federal money and a foolish effort that encouraged laziness among blacks. Congress renewed the bureau's charter in 1866, but President Johnson, who steadfastly believed that the work of restoring the Union had been completed, vetoed the re-chartering. Radical Republicans continued to support the bureau, igniting a contest between Congress and the president that intensified during the next several years. Part of this dispute involved conflicting visions of the proper role of the federal government. Radical Republicans believed in the constructive power of the federal government to ensure a better day for freed people. Others, including Johnson, denied that the government had any such role to play.

**Note:**

**The Freedmen's Bureau**

The image below ([\[link\]](#)) shows a campaign poster for Hiester Clymer, who ran for governor of Pennsylvania in 1866 on a platform of white supremacy.



The caption of this image reads, “The Freedman’s Bureau! An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man. Twice vetoed by the President, and made a law by Congress. Support Congress & you support the Negro. Sustain the President & you protect the white man.”

The image in the foreground shows an indolent black man wondering, “Whar is de use for me to work as long as dey make dese appropriations.” White men toil in the background, chopping wood and plowing a field. The text above them reads, “In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread. . . . The white man must work to keep his children and pay his taxes.” In the middle background, the Freedmen’s Bureau looks like the Capitol, and the pillars are inscribed with racist assumptions of things blacks value, like “rum,” “idleness,” and “white women.” On the right are estimates of the costs of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the bounties (fees for enlistment) given to both white and black Union soldiers. What does this poster indicate about the political climate of the Reconstruction era? How might different people have received this image?



## BLACK CODES

In 1865 and 1866, as Johnson announced the end of Reconstruction, southern states began to pass a series of discriminatory state laws collectively known as **black codes**. While the laws varied in both content and severity from state to state, the goal of the laws remained largely consistent. In effect, these codes were designed to maintain the social and economic structure of racial slavery in the absence of slavery itself. The laws codified white supremacy by restricting the civic participation of freed slaves—depriving them of the right to vote, the right to serve on juries, the right to own or carry weapons, and, in some cases, even the right to rent or lease land.

A chief component of the black codes was designed to fulfill an important economic need in the postwar South. Slavery had been a pillar of economic stability in the region before the war. To maintain agricultural production, the South had relied on slaves to work the land. Now the region was faced with the daunting prospect of making the transition from a slave economy to one where labor was purchased on the open market. Not surprisingly, planters in the southern states were reluctant to make such a transition. Instead, they drafted black laws that would re-create the antebellum economic structure with the façade of a free-labor system.

Black codes used a variety of tactics to tie freed slaves to the land. To work, the freed slaves were forced to sign contracts with their employer. These contracts prevented blacks from working for more than one employer. This meant that, unlike in a free labor market, blacks could not positively influence wages and conditions by choosing to work for the employer who gave them the best terms. The predictable outcome was that freed slaves were forced to work for very low wages. With such low wages, and no ability to supplement income with additional work, workers were reduced to relying on loans from their employers. The debt that these workers incurred ensured that they could never escape from their condition. Those former slaves who attempt to violate these contracts could be fined or beaten. Those who refused to sign contracts at all could be arrested for vagrancy and then made to work for no wages, essentially being reduced to the very definition of a slave.

The black codes left no doubt that the former breakaway Confederate states intended to maintain white supremacy at all costs. These draconian state laws helped spur the congressional Joint Committee on Reconstruction into action. Its members felt that ending slavery with the Thirteenth Amendment did not go far enough. Congress extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau to combat the black codes and in April 1866 passed the first Civil Rights Act, which established the citizenship of African Americans. This was a significant step that contradicted the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott decision, which declared that blacks could never be citizens. The law also gave the federal government the right to intervene in state affairs to protect the rights of citizens, and thus, of African Americans. President Johnson, who continued to insist that restoration of the United States had already been accomplished, vetoed the 1866 Civil Rights Act. However, Congress mustered the necessary votes to override his veto. Despite the Civil Rights Act, the black codes endured, forming the foundation of the racially discriminatory Jim Crow segregation policies that impoverished generations of African Americans.

## **THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT**

Questions swirled about the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. The Supreme Court, in its 1857 decision forbidding black citizenship, had interpreted the Constitution in a certain way; many argued that the 1866 statute, alone, could not alter that interpretation. Seeking to overcome all legal questions, Radical Republicans drafted another constitutional amendment with provisions that followed those of the 1866 Civil Rights Act. In July 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment went to state legislatures for ratification.

The Fourteenth Amendment stated, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." It gave citizens equal protection under both the state and federal law, overturning the Dred Scott decision. It eliminated the three-fifths compromise of the 1787 Constitution, whereby slaves had been counted as three-fifths of a free white person, and it reduced the number of House representatives and Electoral College electors for any state that denied suffrage to any adult male inhabitant,

black or white. As Radical Republicans had proposed in the Wade-Davis bill, individuals who had “engaged in insurrection or rebellion [against] . . . or given aid or comfort to the enemies [of]” the United States were barred from holding political (state or federal) or military office unless pardoned by two-thirds of Congress.

The amendment also answered the question of debts arising from the Civil War by specifying that all debts incurred by fighting to defeat the Confederacy would be honored. Confederate debts, however, would not: “[N]either the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.” Thus, claims by former slaveholders requesting compensation for slave property had no standing. Any state that ratified the Fourteenth Amendment would automatically be readmitted. Yet, all former Confederate states refused to ratify the amendment in 1866.

President Johnson called openly for the rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment, a move that drove a further wedge between him and congressional Republicans. In late summer of 1866, he gave a series of speeches, known as the “swing around the circle,” designed to gather support for his mild version of Reconstruction. Johnson felt that ending slavery went far enough; extending the rights and protections of citizenship to freed people, he believed, went much too far. He continued to believe that blacks were inferior to whites. The president’s “swing around the circle” speeches to gain support for his program and derail the Radical Republicans proved to be a disaster, as hecklers provoked Johnson to make damaging statements. Radical Republicans charged that Johnson had been drunk when he made his speeches. As a result, Johnson’s reputation plummeted.

**Note:**

Read the text of the [Fourteenth Amendment](#) and then view the [original document](#) at Our Documents.

## Section Summary

The conflict between President Johnson and the Republican-controlled Congress over the proper steps to be taken with the defeated Confederacy grew in intensity in the years immediately following the Civil War. While the president concluded that all that needed to be done in the South had been done by early 1866, Congress forged ahead to stabilize the defeated Confederacy and extend to freed people citizenship and equality before the law. Congress prevailed over Johnson's vetoes as the friction between the president and the Republicans increased.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following was *not* one of the functions of the Freedmen's Bureau?

- A. collecting taxes
- B. reuniting families
- C. establishing schools
- D. helping workers secure labor contracts

---

#### Solution:

A

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which person or group was most responsible for the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment?

- A. President Johnson
- B. northern voters

- C. southern voters
- D. Radical Republicans in Congress

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** What was the goal of the black codes?

---

**Solution:**

The black codes in southern states had the goal of keeping blacks impoverished and in debt. Black codes outlawed vagrancy and required all black men to have an annual labor contract, which gave southern states an excuse to arrest those who failed to meet these requirements and put them to hard labor.

## Glossary

### black codes

laws some southern states designed to maintain white supremacy by keeping freed people impoverished and in debt

### Freedmen's Bureau

the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, which was created in 1865 to ease blacks' transition from slavery to freedom

## Chapter 18: Radical Reconstruction, 1867–1872

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of the second phase of Reconstruction and some of the key legislation put forward by Congress
- Describe the impeachment of President Johnson
- Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of the Fifteenth Amendment

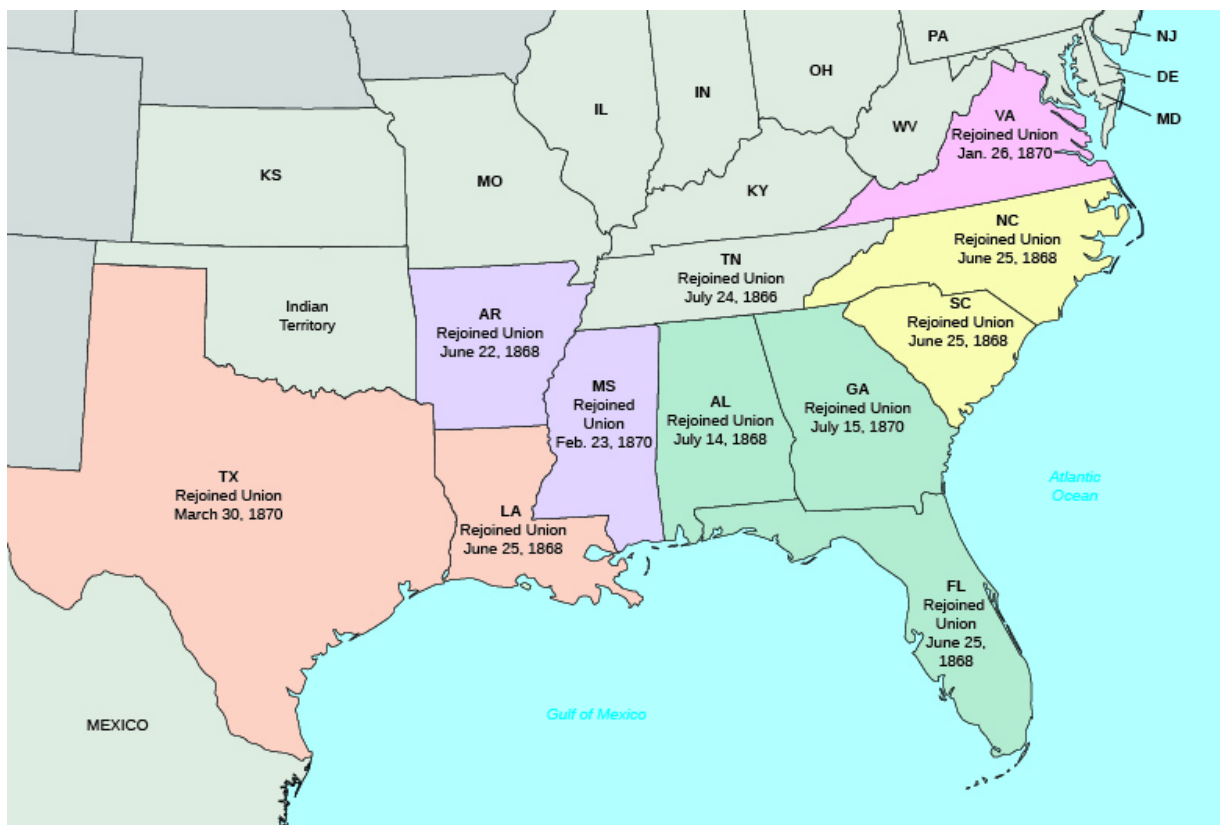
During the Congressional election in the fall of 1866, Republicans gained even greater victories. This was due in large measure to the northern voter opposition that had developed toward President Johnson because of the inflexible and overbearing attitude he had exhibited in the White House, as well as his missteps during his 1866 speaking tour. Leading Radical Republicans in Congress included Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner (the same senator whom proslavery South Carolina representative Preston Brooks had thrashed with his cane in 1856 during the Bleeding Kansas crisis) and Pennsylvania representative Thaddeus Stevens. These men and their supporters envisioned a much more expansive change in the South. Sumner advocated integrating schools and giving black men the right to vote while disenfranchising many southern voters. For his part, Stevens considered that the southern states had forfeited their rights as states when they seceded, and were no more than conquered territory that the federal government could organize as it wished. He envisioned the redistribution of plantation lands and U.S. military control over the former Confederacy.

Their goals included the transformation of the South from an area built on slave labor to a free-labor society. They also wanted to ensure that freed people were protected and given the opportunity for a better life. Violent race riots in Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1866 gave greater urgency to the second phase of Reconstruction, begun in 1867.

### **THE RECONSTRUCTION ACTS**

The 1867 Military Reconstruction Act, which encompassed the vision of Radical Republicans, set a new direction for Reconstruction in the South. Republicans saw this law, and three supplementary laws passed by Congress that year, called the Reconstruction Acts, as a way to deal with the

disorder in the South. The 1867 act divided the ten southern states that had yet to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment into five military districts (Tennessee had already been readmitted to the Union by this time and so was excluded from these acts). Martial law was imposed, and a Union general commanded each district. These generals and twenty thousand federal troops stationed in the districts were charged with protecting freed people. When a supplementary act extended the right to vote to all freed men of voting age (21 years old), the military in each district oversaw the elections and the registration of voters. Only after new state constitutions had been written and states had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment could these states rejoin the Union. Predictably, President Johnson vetoed the Reconstruction Acts, viewing them as both unnecessary and unconstitutional. Once again, Congress overrode Johnson's vetoes, and by the end of 1870, all the southern states under military rule had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and been restored to the Union ([\[link\]](#)).



The map above shows the five military districts established by the

1867 Military Reconstruction Act and the date each state rejoined the Union. Tennessee was not included in the Reconstruction Acts as it had already been readmitted to the Union at the time of their passage.

## **THE IMPEACHMENT OF PRESIDENT JOHNSON**

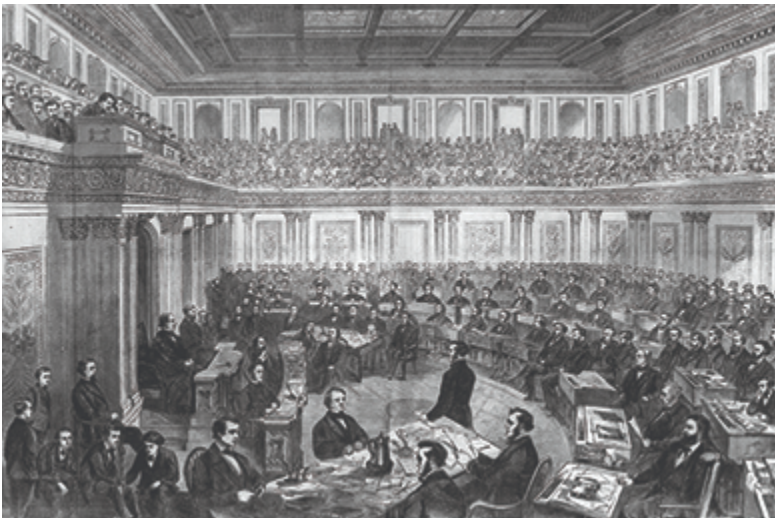
President Johnson's relentless vetoing of congressional measures created a deep rift in Washington, DC, and neither he nor Congress would back down. Johnson's prickly personality proved to be a liability, and many people found him grating. Moreover, he firmly believed in white supremacy, declaring in his 1868 State of the Union address, "The attempt to place the white population under the domination of persons of color in the South has impaired, if not destroyed, the kindly relations that had previously existed between them; and mutual distrust has engendered a feeling of animosity which leading in some instances to collision and bloodshed, has prevented that cooperation between the two races so essential to the success of industrial enterprise in the southern states." The president's racism put him even further at odds with those in Congress who wanted to create full equality between blacks and whites.

The Republican majority in Congress by now despised the president, and they wanted to prevent him from interfering in congressional Reconstruction. To that end, Radical Republicans passed two laws of dubious constitutionality. The Command of the Army Act prohibited the president from issuing military orders except through the commanding general of the army, who could not be relieved or reassigned without the consent of the Senate. The Tenure of Office Act, which Congress passed in 1867, required the president to gain the approval of the Senate whenever he appointed or removed officials. Congress had passed this act to ensure that Republicans who favored Radical Reconstruction would not be barred or stripped of their jobs. In August 1867, President Johnson removed Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who had aligned himself with the Radical Republicans, without gaining Senate approval. He replaced Stanton with Ulysses S. Grant, but Grant resigned and sided with the Republicans against the president. Many Radical Republicans welcomed this blunder by



the president as it allowed them to take action to remove Johnson from office, arguing that Johnson had openly violated the Tenure of Office Act. The House of Representatives quickly drafted a resolution to impeach him, a first in American history.

In impeachment proceedings, the House of Representatives serves as the prosecution and the Senate acts as judge, deciding whether the president should be removed from office ([link](#)). The House brought eleven counts against Johnson, all alleging his encroachment on the powers of Congress. In the Senate, Johnson barely survived. Seven Republicans joined the Democrats and independents to support acquittal; the final vote was 35 to 19, one vote short of the required two-thirds majority. The Radicals then dropped the impeachment effort, but the events had effectively silenced President Johnson, and Radical Republicans continued with their plan to reconstruct the South.



This illustration by Theodore R. Davis, which was captioned “The Senate as a court of impeachment for the trial of Andrew Johnson,” appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1868. Here, the House of Representatives brings its grievances

against Johnson to the Senate during impeachment hearings.

## **THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT**

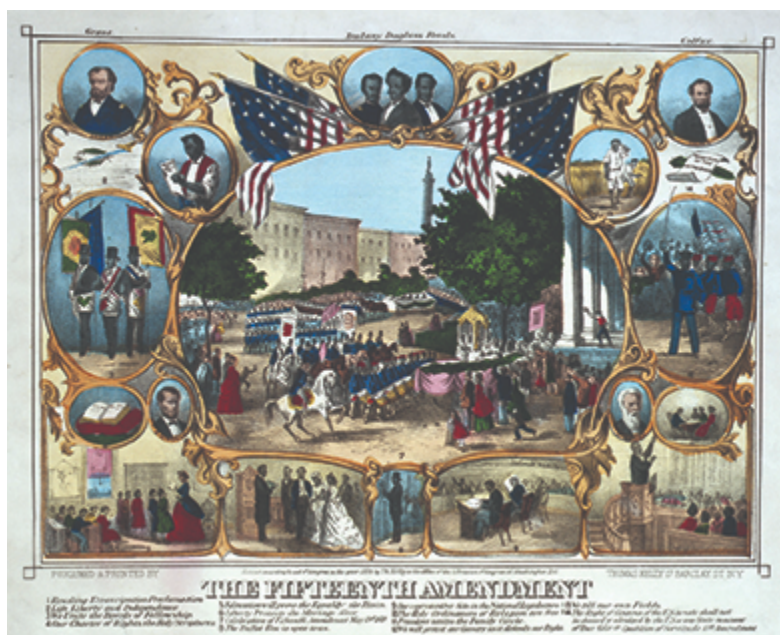
In November 1868, Ulysses S. Grant, the Union's war hero, easily won the presidency in a landslide victory. The Democratic nominee was Horatio Seymour, but the Democrats carried the stigma of disunion. The Republicans, in their campaign, blamed the devastating Civil War and the violence of its aftermath on the rival party, a strategy that southerners called "waving the bloody shirt."

Though Grant did not side with the Radical Republicans, his victory allowed the continuance of the Radical Reconstruction program. In the winter of 1869, Republicans introduced another constitutional amendment, the third of the Reconstruction era. When Republicans had passed the Fourteenth Amendment, which addressed citizenship rights and equal protections, they were unable to explicitly ban states from withholding the franchise based on race. With the Fifteenth Amendment, they sought to correct this major weakness by finally extending to black men the right to vote. The amendment directed that "[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

Unfortunately, the new amendment had weaknesses of its own. As part of a compromise to ensure the passage of the amendment with the broadest possible support, drafters of the amendment specifically excluded language that addressed literacy tests and poll taxes, the most common ways blacks were traditionally disenfranchised in both the North and the South. Indeed, Radical Republican leader Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, himself an ardent supporter of legal equality without exception to race, refused to vote for the amendment precisely because it did not address these obvious loopholes.

Despite these weaknesses, the language of the amendment did provide for universal manhood suffrage—the right of all men to vote—and crucially identified black men, including those who had been slaves, as deserving the

right to vote. This, the third and final of the Reconstruction amendments, was ratified in 1870 ([link](#)). With the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, many believed that the process of restoring the Union was safely coming to a close and that the rights of freed slaves were finally secure. African American communities expressed great hope as they celebrated what they understood to be a national confirmation of their unqualified citizenship.



*The Fifteenth Amendment. Celebrated May 19th, 1870*, a commemorative print by Thomas Kelly, celebrates the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment with a series of vignettes highlighting black rights and those who championed them. Portraits include Ulysses S. Grant, Abraham Lincoln, and John Brown, as well as black leaders Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and Hiram Revels. Vignettes include the celebratory parade for the amendment's passage, "The Ballot Box is open to us,"

and “Our representative Sits in the National  
Legislature.”

**Note:**

Visit the [Library of Congress](#) to take a closer look at *The Fifteenth Amendment* by Thomas Kelly. Examine each individual vignette and the accompanying text. Why do you think Kelly chose these to highlight?

## WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE

While the Fifteenth Amendment may have been greeted with applause in many corners, leading women’s rights activists, who had been campaigning for decades for the right to vote, saw it as a major disappointment. More dispiriting still was the fact that many women’s rights activists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had played a large part in the abolitionist movement leading up to the Civil War. Following the war, women and men, white and black, formed the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) for the expressed purpose of securing “equal Rights to all American citizens, especially the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, color or sex.” Two years later, with the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, section 2 of which specifically qualified the liberties it extended to “male citizens,” it seemed as though the progress made in support of civil rights was not only passing women by but was purposely codifying their exclusion. As Congress debated the language of the Fifteenth Amendment, some held out hope that it would finally extend the franchise to women. Those hopes were dashed when Congress adopted the final language.

The consequence of these frustrated hopes was the effective split of a civil rights movement that had once been united in support of African Americans and women. Seeing this split occur, Frederick Douglass, a great admirer of Stanton, struggled to argue for a piecemeal approach that should prioritize the franchise for black men if that was the only option. He insisted that his

support for women's right to vote was sincere, but that getting black men the right to vote was "of the most urgent necessity." "The government of this country loves women," he argued. "They are the sisters, mothers, wives and daughters of our rulers; but the negro is loathed. . . . The negro needs suffrage to protect his life and property, and to ensure him respect and education."

These appeals were largely accepted by women's rights leaders and AERA members like Lucy Stone and Henry Browne Blackwell, who believed that more time was needed to bring about female suffrage. Others demanded immediate action. Among those who pressed forward despite the setback were Stanton and Anthony. They felt greatly aggrieved at the fact that other abolitionists, with whom they had worked closely for years, did not demand that women be included in the language of the amendments. Stanton argued that the women's vote would be necessary to counter the influence of uneducated freedmen in the South and the waves of poor European immigrants arriving in the East.

In 1869, Stanton and Anthony helped organize the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), an organization dedicated to ensuring that women gained the right to vote immediately, not at some future, undetermined date. Some women, including Virginia Minor, a member of the NWSA, took action by trying to register to vote; Minor attempted this in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1872. When election officials turned her away, Minor brought the issue to the Missouri state courts, arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment ensured that she was a citizen with the right to vote. This legal effort to bring about women's suffrage eventually made its way to the Supreme Court, which declared in 1874 that "the constitution of the United States does not confer the right of suffrage upon any one," effectively dismissing Minor's claim.

**Note:**

**Constitution of the National Woman Suffrage Association**

Despite the Fifteenth Amendment's failure to guarantee female suffrage, women did gain the right to vote in western territories, with the Wyoming Territory leading the way in 1869. One reason for this was a belief that

giving women the right to vote would provide a moral compass to the otherwise lawless western frontier. Extending the right to vote in western territories also provided an incentive for white women to emigrate to the West, where they were scarce. However, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and others believed that immediate action on the national front was required, leading to the organization of the NWSA and its resulting constitution. "ARTICLE 1.—This organization shall be called the National Woman Suffrage Association." "ARTICLE 2.—The object of this Association shall be to secure STATE and NATIONAL protection for women citizens in the exercise of their right to vote." "ARTICLE 3.—All citizens of the United States subscribing to this Constitution, and contributing not less than one dollar annually, shall be considered members of the Association, with the right to participate in its deliberations." "ARTICLE 4.—The officers of this Association shall be a President, Vice-Presidents from each of the States and Territories, Corresponding and Recording Secretaries, a Treasurer, an Executive Committee of not less than five, and an Advisory Committee consisting of one or more persons from each State and Territory." "ARTICLE 5.—All Woman Suffrage Societies throughout the country shall be welcomed as auxiliaries; and their accredited officers or duly appointed representatives shall be recognized as members of the National Association.

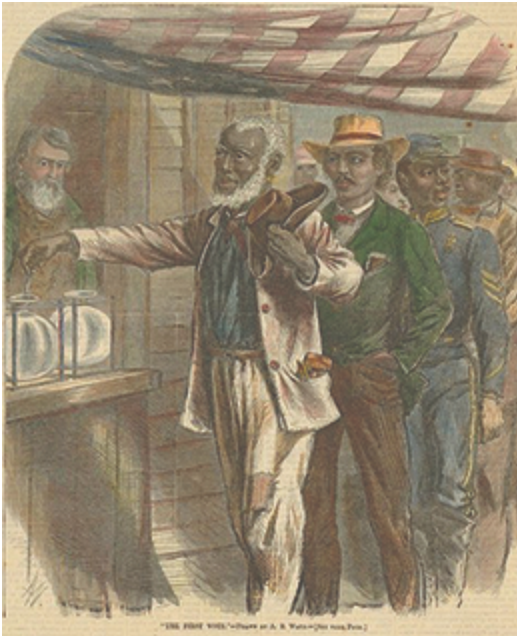
OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION." "PRESIDENT.  
SUSAN B. ANTHONY, Rochester, N. Y."

How was the NWSA organized? How would the fact that it operated at the national level, rather than at the state or local level, help it to achieve its goals?

## BLACK POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Black voter registration in the late 1860s and the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment finally brought what Lincoln had characterized as “a new birth of freedom.” **Union Leagues**, fraternal groups founded in the North that promoted loyalty to the Union and the Republican Party during the Civil

War, expanded into the South after the war and were transformed into political clubs that served both political and civic functions. As centers of the black communities in the South, the leagues became vehicles for the dissemination of information, acted as mediators between members of the black community and the white establishment, and served other practical functions like helping to build schools and churches for the community they served. As extensions of the Republican Party, these leagues worked to enroll newly enfranchised black voters, campaign for candidates, and generally help the party win elections ([link](#)).



*The First Vote*, by Alfred R. Waud, appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1867. The Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the right to vote for the first time.

The political activities of the leagues launched a great many African Americans and former slaves into politics throughout the South. For the



first time, blacks began to hold political office, and several were elected to the U.S. Congress. In the 1870s, fifteen members of the House of Representatives and two senators were black. The two senators, Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels, were both from Mississippi, the home state of former U.S. senator and later Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Hiram Revels ([link](#)), was a freeborn man from North Carolina who rose to prominence as a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and then as a Mississippi state senator in 1869. The following year he was elected by the state legislature to fill one of Mississippi's two U.S. Senate seats, which had been vacant since the war. His arrival in Washington, DC, drew intense interest: as the *New York Times* noted, when "the colored Senator from Mississippi, was sworn in and admitted to his seat this afternoon . . . there was not an inch of standing or sitting room in the galleries, so densely were they packed. . . . When the Vice-President uttered the words, 'The Senator elect will now advance and take the oath,' a pin might have been heard drop."



Hiram Revels served as a preacher throughout the Midwest before settling in Mississippi in 1866. When



he was elected by the  
Mississippi state  
legislature in 1870, he  
became the country's first  
African American senator.

**Note:**

**Senator Revels on Segregated Schools in Washington, DC**

Hiram R. Revels became the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1870. In 1871, he gave the following speech about Washington's segregated schools before Congress.

Will establishing such [desegregated] schools as I am now advocating in this District harm our white friends? . . . By some it is contended that if we establish mixed schools here a great insult will be given to the white citizens, and that the white schools will be seriously damaged. . . . When I was on a lecturing tour in the state of Ohio . . . [o]ne of the leading gentlemen connected with the schools in that town came to see me. . . . He asked me, "Have you been to New England, where they have mixed schools?" I replied, "I have sir." "Well," said he, "please tell me this: does not social equality result from mixed schools?" "No, sir; very far from it," I responded. "Why," said he, "how can it be otherwise?" I replied, "I will tell you how it can be otherwise, and how it is otherwise. Go to the schools and you see there white children and colored children seated side by side, studying their lessons, standing side by side and reciting their lessons, and perhaps in walking to school they may walk together; but that is the last of it. The white children go to their homes; the colored children go to theirs; and on the Lord's day you will see those colored children in colored churches, and the white family, you will see the white children there, and the

colored children at entertainments given by persons of their color.” I aver, sir, that mixed schools are very far from bringing about social equality.”

According to Senator Revels’s speech, what is “social equality” and why is it important to the issue of desegregated schools? Does Revels favor social equality or social segregation? Did social equality exist in the United States in 1871?

Though the fact of their presence was dramatic and important, as the *New York Times* description above demonstrates, the few African American representatives and senators who served in Congress during Reconstruction represented only a tiny fraction of the many hundreds, possibly thousands, of blacks who served in a great number of capacities at the local and state levels. The South during the early 1870s brimmed with freed slaves and freeborn blacks serving as school board commissioners, county commissioners, clerks of court, board of education and city council members, justices of the peace, constables, coroners, magistrates, sheriffs, auditors, and registrars. This wave of local African American political activity contributed to and was accompanied by a new concern for the poor and disadvantaged in the South. The southern Republican leadership did away with the hated black codes, undid the work of white supremacists, and worked to reduce obstacles confronting freed people.

Reconstruction governments invested in infrastructure, paying special attention to the rehabilitation of the southern railroads. They set up public education systems that enrolled both white and black students. They established or increased funding for hospitals, orphanages, and asylums for the insane. In some states, the state and local governments provided the poor with basic necessities like firewood and even bread. And to pay for these new services and subsidies, the governments levied taxes on land and property, an action that struck at the heart of the foundation of southern economic inequality. Indeed, the land tax compounded the existing problems of white landowners, who were often cash-poor, and contributed

to resentment of what southerners viewed as another northern attack on their way of life.

White southerners reacted with outrage at the changes imposed upon them. The sight of once-enslaved blacks serving in positions of authority as sheriffs, congressmen, and city council members stimulated great resentment at the process of Reconstruction and its undermining of the traditional social and economic foundations of the South. Indignant southerners referred to this period of reform as a time of “negro misrule.” They complained of profligate corruption on the part of vengeful freed slaves and greedy northerners looking to fill their pockets with the South’s riches. Unfortunately for the great many honest reformers, southerners did have a handful of real examples of corruption they could point to, such as legislators using state revenues to buy hams and perfumes or giving themselves inflated salaries. Such examples, however, were relatively few and largely comparable to nineteenth-century corruption across the country. Yet these powerful stories, combined with deep-seated racial animosity toward blacks in the South, led to Democratic campaigns to “redeem” state governments. Democrats across the South leveraged planters’ economic power and wielded white vigilante violence to ultimately take back state political power from the Republicans. By the time President Grant’s attentions were being directed away from the South and toward the Indian Wars in the West in 1876, power in the South had largely been returned to whites and Reconstruction was effectively abandoned. By the end of 1876, only South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida still had Republican governments.

The sense that the South had been unfairly sacrificed to northern vice and black vengeance, despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary, persisted for many decades. So powerful and pervasive was this narrative that by the time D. W. Griffith released his 1915 motion picture, *The Birth of a Nation*, whites around the country were primed to accept the fallacy that white southerners were the frequent victims of violence and violation at the hands of unrestrained blacks. The reality is that the opposite was true. White southerners orchestrated a sometimes violent and generally successful counterrevolution against Reconstruction policies in the South beginning in the 1860s. Those who worked to change and modernize the South typically

did so under the stern gaze of exasperated whites and threats of violence. Black Republican officials in the South were frequently terrorized, assaulted, and even murdered with impunity by organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. When not ignoring the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments altogether, white leaders often used trickery and fraud at the polls to get the results they wanted. As Reconstruction came to a close, these methods came to define southern life for African Americans for nearly a century afterward.

## Section Summary

Though President Johnson declared Reconstruction complete less than a year after the Confederate surrender, members of Congress disagreed. Republicans in Congress began to implement their own plan of bringing law and order to the South through the use of military force and martial law. Radical Republicans who advocated for a more equal society pushed their program forward as well, leading to the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which finally gave blacks the right to vote. The new amendment empowered black voters, who made good use of the vote to elect black politicians. It disappointed female suffragists, however, who had labored for years to gain women's right to vote. By the end of 1870, all the southern states under Union military control had satisfied the requirements of Congress and been readmitted to the Union.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Under Radical Reconstruction, which of the following did former Confederate states *not* need to do in order to rejoin the Union?

- A. pass the Fourteenth Amendment
- B. pass the Fifteenth Amendment
- C. revise their state constitution
- D. allow all freed men over the age of 21 to vote

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

The House of Representatives impeached Andrew Johnson over \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the Civil Rights Act
- B. the Fourteenth Amendment
- C. the Military Reconstruction Act
- D. the Tenure of Office Act

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What were the benefits and drawbacks of the Fifteenth Amendment?

---

**Solution:**

The Fifteenth Amendment granted the vote to all black men, giving freed slaves and free blacks greater political power than they had ever had in the United States. Blacks in former Confederate states elected a handful of black U.S. congressmen and a great many black local and state leaders who instituted ambitious reform and modernization projects in the South. However, the Fifteenth Amendment continued to exclude women from voting. Women continued to fight for suffrage through the NWSA and AWSA.

## **Glossary**

### **Union Leagues**

fraternal groups loyal to the Union and the Republican Party that became political and civic centers for blacks in former Confederate states

## Chapter 19: The Collapse of Reconstruction

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the reasons for the collapse of Reconstruction
- Describe the efforts of white southern “redeemers” to roll back the gains of Reconstruction

The effort to remake the South generated a brutal reaction among southern whites, who were committed to keeping blacks in a subservient position. To prevent blacks from gaining economic ground and to maintain cheap labor for the agricultural economy, an exploitative system of sharecropping spread throughout the South. Domestic terror organizations, most notably the Ku Klux Klan, employed various methods (arson, whipping, murder) to keep freed people from voting and achieving political, social, or economic equality with whites.

### **BUILDING BLACK COMMUNITIES**

The degraded status of black men and women had placed them outside the limits of what antebellum southern whites considered appropriate gender roles and familial hierarchies. Slave marriages did not enjoy legal recognition. Enslaved men were humiliated and deprived of authority and of the ability to protect enslaved women, who were frequently exposed to the brutality and sexual domination of white masters and vigilantes alike. Slave parents could not protect their children, who could be bought, sold, put to work, brutally disciplined, and abused without their consent; parents, too, could be sold away from their children ([\[link\]](#)). Moreover, the division of labor idealized in white southern society, in which men worked the land and women performed the role of domestic caretaker, was null and void where slaves were concerned. Both slave men and women were made to perform hard labor in the fields.



After emancipation, many fathers who had been sold from their families as slaves—a circumstance illustrated in the engraving above, which shows a male slave forced to leave his wife and children—set out to find those lost families and rebuild their lives.

In the Reconstruction era, African Americans embraced the right to enjoy the family bonds and the expression of gender norms they had been systematically denied. Many thousands of freed black men who had been separated from their families as slaves took to the road to find their long-lost spouses and children and renew their bonds. In one instance, a journalist reported having interviewed a freed slave who traveled over six hundred miles on foot in search of the family that was taken from him while in bondage. Couples that had been spared separation quickly set out to legalize their marriages, often by way of the Freedmen's Bureau, now that this option was available. Those who had no families would sometimes relocate to southern towns and cities, so as to be part of the larger black



community where churches and other mutual aid societies offered help and camaraderie.

## SHARECROPPING

Most freed people stayed in the South on the lands where their families and loved ones had worked for generations as slaves. They hungered to own and farm their own lands instead of the lands of white plantation owners. In one case, former slaves on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina initially had hopes of owning the land they had worked for many decades after General Sherman directed that freed people be granted title to plots of forty acres.

The Freedmen's Bureau provided additional cause for such hopes by directing that leases and titles to lands in the South be made available to former slaves. However, these efforts ran afoul of President Johnson. In 1865, he ordered the return of land to white landowners, a setback for those freed people, such as those on the South Carolina Sea Islands, who had begun to cultivate the land as their own. Ultimately, there was no redistribution of land in the South.

The end of slavery meant the transition to wage labor. However, this conversion did not entail a new era of economic independence for former slaves. While they no longer faced relentless toil under the lash, freed people emerged from slavery without any money and needed farm implements, food, and other basic necessities to start their new lives. Under the **crop-lien system**, store owners extended credit to farmers under the agreement that the debtors would pay with a portion of their future harvest. However, the creditors charged high interest rates, making it even harder for freed people to gain economic independence.

Throughout the South, **sharecropping** took root, a crop-lien system that worked to the advantage of landowners. Under the system, freed people rented the land they worked, often on the same plantations where they had been slaves. Some landless whites also became sharecroppers. Sharecroppers paid their landlords with the crops they grew, often as much as half their harvest. Sharecropping favored the landlords and ensured that

freed people could not attain independent livelihoods. The year-to-year leases meant no incentive existed to substantially improve the land, and high interest payments siphoned additional money away from the farmers. Sharecroppers often became trapped in a never-ending cycle of debt, unable to buy their own land and unable to stop working for their creditor because of what they owed. The consequences of sharecropping affected the entire South for many generations, severely limiting economic development and ensuring that the South remained an agricultural backwater.

## THE “INVISIBLE EMPIRE OF THE SOUTH”

Paramilitary white-supremacist terror organizations in the South helped bring about the collapse of Reconstruction, using violence as their primary weapon. The “Invisible Empire of the South,” or **Ku Klux Klan**, stands as the most notorious. The Klan was founded in 1866 as an oath-bound fraternal order of Confederate veterans in Tennessee, with former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest as its first leader. The organization—its name likely derived from *kuklos*, a Greek word meaning circle—devised elaborate rituals and grandiose names for its ranking members: Grand Wizard, Grand Dragon, Grand Titan, and Grand Cyclops. Soon, however, this fraternal organization evolved into a vigilante terrorist group that vented southern whites’ collective frustration over the loss of the war and the course of Radical Reconstruction through acts of intimidation and violence.

The Klan terrorized newly freed blacks to deter them from exercising their citizenship rights and freedoms. Other anti-black vigilante groups around the South began to adopt the Klan name and perpetrate acts of unspeakable violence against anyone they considered a tool of Reconstruction. Indeed, as historians have noted, Klan units around the South operated autonomously and with a variety of motives. Some may have sincerely believed they were righting wrongs, others merely satisfying their lurid desires for violence. Nor was the Klan the only racist vigilante organization. Other groups, like the Red Shirts from Mississippi and the Knights of the White Camelia and the White League, both from Louisiana, also sprang up at this time. The Klan and similar organizations also worked as an extension of the Democratic Party to win elections.

Despite the great variety in Klan membership, on the whole, the group tended to direct its attention toward persecuting freed people and people they considered **carpetbaggers**, a term of abuse applied to northerners accused of having come to the South to acquire wealth through political power at the expense of southerners. The colorful term captured the disdain of southerners for these people, reflecting the common assumption that these men, sensing great opportunity, packed up all their worldly possessions in carpetbags, a then-popular type of luggage, and made their way to the South. Implied in this definition is the notion that these men came from little and were thus shiftless wanderers motivated only by the desire for quick money. In reality, these northerners tended to be young, idealistic, often well-educated men who responded to northern campaigns urging them to lead the modernization of the South. But the image of them as swindlers taking advantage of the South at its time of need resonated with a white southern population aggrieved by loss and economic decline. Southern whites who supported Reconstruction, known as **scalawags**, also generated great hostility as traitors to the South. They, too, became targets of the Klan and similar groups.

The Klan seized on the pervasive but largely fictional narrative of the northern carpetbagger as a powerful tool for restoring white supremacy and overturning Republican state governments in the South ([\[link\]](#)). To preserve a white-dominated society, Klan members punished blacks for attempting to improve their station in life or acting “uppity.” To prevent freed people from attaining an education, the Klan burned public schools. In an effort to stop blacks from voting, the Klan murdered, whipped, and otherwise intimidated freed people and their white supporters. It wasn’t uncommon for Klan members to intimidate Union League members and Freedmen’s Bureau workers. The Klan even perpetrated acts of political assassination, killing a sitting U.S. congressman from Arkansas and three state congressmen from South Carolina.

## I AM COMMITTEE

---

1st. No man shall squat negroes on his place unless they are all under his employ male and female.

2d. Negro women shall be employed by white persons

3d. All children shall be hired out for something.

4th. Negroes found in cabins to themselves shall suffer the penalty.

5th. Negroes shall not be allowed to hire negroes.

6th. Idle men, women or children, shall suffer the penalty.

7th. All white men found with negroes in secret places shall be dealt with and those that hire negroes must pay promptly and act with good faith to the negro, I will make the negro do his part, and the white must too.

8th. For the first offence is one hundred lashes—the second is looking up a sap lin.

9th. This I do for the benefit of all young or old, high and tall, black and white. Any one that may not like these rules can try their luck, and see whether or not I will be found doing my duty.

10th. Negroes found stealing from any one or taking from their employers to other negroes, death is the first penalty.

11th. Running about late of nights shall be strictly dealt with.

12th. White man and negro, I am everywhere. I have friends in every place, do your duty and I will have but little to do.

The Ku Klux Klan posted circulars such as this 1867 West Virginia broadside to warn blacks and white sympathizers of the power and ubiquity of the Klan.

Klan tactics included riding out to victims' houses, masked and armed, and firing into the homes or burning them down ([link](#)). Other tactics relied more on the threat of violence, such as happened in Mississippi when fifty masked Klansmen rode out to a local schoolteacher's house to express their displeasure with the school tax and to suggest that she consider leaving. Still other tactics intimidated through imaginative trickery. One such method was to dress up as ghosts of slain Confederate soldiers and stage stunts designed to convince their victims of their supernatural abilities.



This illustration by Frank Bellew, captioned “Visit of the Ku-Klux,” appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1872. A hooded Klansman surreptitiously points a rifle at an unaware black family in their home.

Regardless of the method, the general goal of reinstating white supremacy as a foundational principle and returning the South to a situation that largely resembled antebellum conditions remained a constant. The Klan used its power to eliminate black economic independence, decimate blacks’ political rights, reclaim white dominance over black women’s bodies and black men’s masculinity, tear apart black communities, and return blacks to earlier patterns of economic and political subservience and social deference. In this, they were largely successful.

**Note:**

Visit [Freedmen’s Bureau Online](#) to view digitized records of attacks on freed people that were reported in Albany, Georgia, between January 1 and October 31, 1868.

The president and Congress, however, were not indifferent to the violence, and they worked to bring it to an end. In 1870, at the insistence of the governor of North Carolina, President Grant told Congress to investigate the Klan. In response, Congress in 1871 created the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. The committee took testimony from freed people in the South, and in 1872, it published a thirteen-volume report on the tactics the Klan used to derail democracy in the South through the use of violence.

**Note:**

**Abram Colby on the Methods of the Ku Klux Klan**

The following statements are from the October 27, 1871, testimony of fifty-two-year-old former slave Abram Colby, which the joint select committee investigating the Klan took in Atlanta, Georgia. Colby had been elected to the lower house of the Georgia State legislature in 1868. "On the 29th of October, they came to my house and broke my door open, took me out of my bed and took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me in the woods for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "I will not tell you a lie." They said, "No; don't tell a lie." . . . I said, "If there was an election to-morrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, I suppose. . . ." "They said I had influence with the negroes of other counties, and had carried the negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me \$5,000 to turn and go with them, and said they would pay me \$2,500 cash if I would turn and let another man go to the legislature in my place. . . ." "I would have come before the court here last week, but I knew it was no use for me to try to get Ku-Klux condemned by Ku-Klux, and I did not come. Mr. Saunders, a member of the grand jury here last week, is the father of one of the very men I knew whipped me. . . ." "They broke something inside of me, and the doctor has been attending to me for more than a year. Sometimes I cannot get up and down off my bed, and my left hand is not of much use to me.

—Abram Colby testimony, Joint Select Committee Report, 1872"

Why did the Klan target Colby? What methods did they use?

Congress also passed a series of three laws designed to stamp out the Klan. Passed in 1870 and 1871, the Enforcement Acts or “Force Acts” were designed to outlaw intimidation at the polls and to give the federal government the power to prosecute crimes against freed people in federal rather than state courts. Congress believed that this last step, a provision in the third Enforcement Act, also called the Ku Klux Klan Act, was necessary in order to ensure that trials would not be decided by white juries in southern states friendly to the Klan. The act also allowed the president to impose martial law in areas controlled by the Klan and gave President Grant the power to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, a continuation of the wartime power granted to President Lincoln. The suspension meant individuals suspected of engaging in Klan activity could be jailed indefinitely.

President Grant made frequent use of the powers granted to him by Congress, especially in South Carolina, where federal troops imposed martial law in nine counties in an effort to derail Klan activities. However, the federal government faced entrenched local organizations and a white population firmly opposed to Radical Reconstruction. Changes came slowly or not at all, and disillusionment set in. After 1872, federal government efforts to put down paramilitary terror in the South waned.

## **“REDEEMERS” AND THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION**

While the president and Congress may have seen the Klan and other clandestine white supremacist, terrorist organizations as a threat to stability and progress in the South, many southern whites saw them as an instrument of order in a world turned upside down. Many white southerners felt humiliated by the process of Radical Reconstruction and the way Republicans had upended southern society, placing blacks in positions of authority while taxing large landowners to pay for the education of former slaves. Those committed to rolling back the tide of Radical Reconstruction in the South called themselves **redeemers**, a label that expressed their desire to redeem their states from northern control and to restore the antebellum social order whereby blacks were kept safely under the boot heel of whites. They represented the Democratic Party in the South and worked tirelessly to end what they saw as an era of “negro misrule.” By

1877, they had succeeded in bringing about the “redemption” of the South, effectively destroying the dream of Radical Reconstruction.

Although Ulysses S. Grant won a second term in the presidential election of 1872, the Republican grip on national political power began to slip in the early 1870s. Three major events undermined Republican control. First, in 1873, the United States experienced the start of a long economic downturn, the result of economic instability in Europe that spread to the United States. In the fall of 1873, the bank of Jay Cooke & Company failed to meet its financial obligations and went bankrupt, setting off a panic in American financial markets. An economic depression ensued, which Democrats blamed on Republicans and which lasted much of the decade.

Second, the Republican Party experienced internal squabbles and divided into two factions. Some Republicans began to question the expansive role of the federal government, arguing for limiting the size and scope of federal initiatives. These advocates, known as Liberal Republicans because they followed classical liberalism in championing small government, formed their own breakaway party. Their ideas changed the nature of the debate over Reconstruction by challenging reliance on federal government help to bring about change in the South. Now some Republicans argued for downsizing Reconstruction efforts.

Third, the Grant administration became mired in scandals, further tarnishing the Republicans while giving Democrats the upper hand. One scandal arose over the siphoning off of money from excise taxes on whiskey. The “Whiskey Ring,” as it was called, involved people at the highest levels of the Grant administration, including the president’s personal secretary, Orville Babcock. Another scandal entangled Crédit Mobilier of America, a construction company and part of the important French Crédit Mobilier banking company. The Union Pacific Railroad company, created by the federal government during the Civil War to construct a transcontinental railroad, paid Crédit Mobilier to build the railroad. However, Crédit Mobilier used the funds it received to buy Union Pacific Railroad bonds and resell them at a huge profit. Some members of Congress, as well as Vice President Schuyler Colfax, had accepted funds from Crédit Mobilier in return for forestalling an inquiry. When the scam became known in 1872,



Democratic opponents of Reconstruction pointed to Crédit Mobilier as an example of corruption in the Republican-dominated federal government and evidence that smaller government was better.

The Democratic Party in the South made significant advances in the 1870s in its efforts to wrest political control from the Republican-dominated state governments. The Ku Klux Klan, as well as other paramilitary groups in the South, often operated as military wings of the Democratic Party in former Confederate states. In one notorious episode following a contested 1872 gubernatorial election in Louisiana, as many as 150 freedmen loyal to the Republican Party were killed at the Colfax courthouse by armed members of the Democratic Party, even as many of them tried to surrender ([link](#)).



In this illustration by Charles Harvey Weigall, captioned “The Louisiana Murders—Gathering the Dead and Wounded” and published in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1873, survivors of the Colfax Massacre tend to those involved in the conflict. The dead and wounded all appear to be black, and two white men on horses

watch over them. Another man stands with  
a gun pointed at the survivors.

In other areas of the South, the Democratic Party gained control over state politics. Texas came under Democratic control by 1873, and in the following year Alabama and Arkansas followed suit. In national politics, too, the Democrats gained ground—especially during the 1874 elections, when they recaptured control of the House of Representatives for the first time since before the Civil War. Every other southern state, with the exception of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana—the states where federal troops remained a force—also fell to the Democratic Party and the restoration of white supremacy. Southerners everywhere celebrated their “redemption” from Radical Republican rule.

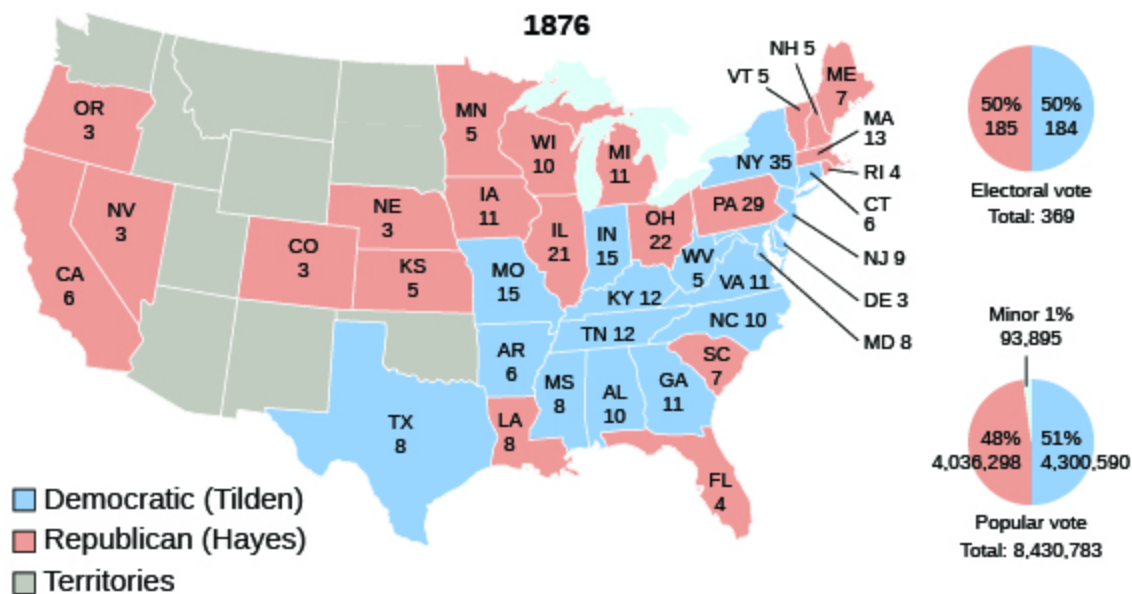
## **THE CONTESTED ELECTION OF 1876**

By the time of the 1876 presidential election, Reconstruction had come to an end in most southern states. In Congress, the political power of the Radical Republicans had waned, although some continued their efforts to realize the dream of equality between blacks and whites. One of the last attempts to do so was the passage of the 1875 Civil Rights Act, which required equality in public places and on juries. This law was challenged in court, and in 1883 the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional, arguing that the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments did not prohibit discrimination by private individuals. By the 1870s, the Supreme Court had also undercut the letter and the spirit of the Fourteenth Amendment by interpreting it as affording freed people only limited federal protection from the Klan and other terror groups.

The country remained bitterly divided, and this was reflected in the contested election of 1876. While Grant wanted to run for a third term, scandals and Democratic successes in the South dashed those hopes. Republicans instead selected Rutherford B. Hayes, the three-time governor of Ohio. Democrats nominated Samuel Tilden, the reform governor of New York, who was instrumental in ending the Tweed Ring and Tammany Hall corruption in New York City. The November election produced an apparent

Democratic victory, as Tilden carried the South and large northern states with a 300,000-vote advantage in the popular vote. However, disputed returns from Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, and Oregon, whose electoral votes totaled twenty, threw the election into doubt.

Hayes could still win if he gained those twenty electoral votes. As the Constitution did not provide a method to determine the validity of disputed votes, the decision fell to Congress, where Republicans controlled the Senate and Democrats controlled the House of Representatives. In late January 1877, Congress tried to break the deadlock by creating a special electoral commission composed of five senators, five representatives, and five justices of the Supreme Court. The congressional delegation represented both parties equally, with five Democrats and five Republicans. The court delegation had two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent—David Davis, who resigned from the Supreme Court (and from the commission) when the Illinois legislature elected him to the Senate. After Davis's resignation, President Grant selected a Republican to take his place, tipping the scales in favor of Hayes. The commission then awarded the disputed electoral votes and the presidency to Hayes, voting on party lines, 8 to 7 ([link](#)). The Democrats called foul, threatening to hold up the commission's decision in the courts.



This map illustrates the results of the presidential election of 1876.

Tilden, the Democratic candidate, swept the South, with the exception of the contested states of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

In what became known as the **Compromise of 1877**, Republican Senate leaders worked with the Democratic leadership so they would support Hayes and the commission's decision. The two sides agreed that one Southern Democrat would be appointed to Hayes's cabinet, Democrats would control federal patronage (the awarding of government jobs) in their areas in the South, and there would be a commitment to generous internal improvements, including federal aid for the Texas and Pacific Railway. Perhaps most important, all remaining federal troops would be withdrawn from the South, a move that effectively ended Reconstruction. Hayes believed that southern leaders would obey and enforce the Reconstruction-era constitutional amendments that protected the rights of freed people. His trust was soon proved to be misguided, much to his dismay, and he devoted a large part of his life to securing rights for freedmen. For their part, the Democrats took over the remaining southern states, creating what became

known as the “Solid South”—a region that consistently voted in a bloc for the Democratic Party.

## Section Summary

The efforts launched by Radical Republicans in the late 1860s generated a massive backlash in the South in the 1870s as whites fought against what they considered “negro misrule.” Paramilitary terrorist cells emerged, committing countless atrocities in their effort to “redeem” the South from black Republican rule. In many cases, these organizations operated as an extension of the Democratic Party. Scandals hobbled the Republican Party, as did a severe economic depression. By 1875, Reconstruction had largely come to an end. The contested presidential election the following year, which was decided in favor of the Republican candidate, and the removal of federal troops from the South only confirmed the obvious: Reconstruction had failed to achieve its primary objective of creating an interracial democracy that provided equal rights to all citizens.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following is *not* one of the methods the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist groups used to intimidate blacks and white sympathizers?

- A. burning public schools
- B. petitioning Congress
- C. murdering freedmen who tried to vote
- D. threatening, beating, and killing those who disagreed with them

---

#### Solution:

B

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Which of the following was the term southerners used for a white southerner who tried to overturn the changes of Reconstruction?

- A. scalawag
- B. carpetbagger
- C. redeemer
- D. white knight

---

**Solution:**

C

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Why was it difficult for southern free blacks to gain economic independence after the Civil War?

---

**Solution:**

Southern blacks emerged from slavery with no money to begin their new lives, so they had to rely on the crop-lien and sharecropping systems. These systems enabled freed people to get tools and rent land to farm, but the high interest rate (paid in harvested crops) made it difficult for them to rise out of poverty.

**Critical Thinking Questions****Exercise:**

**Problem:**

How do you think would history have been different if Lincoln had not been assassinated? How might his leadership after the war have differed from that of Andrew Johnson?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Was the Thirteenth Amendment a success or a failure? Discuss the reasons for your answer.

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Consider the differences between the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. What does the Fourteenth Amendment do that the Thirteenth does not?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Consider social, political, and economic equality. In what ways did Radical Reconstruction address and secure these forms of equality? Where did it fall short?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Consider the problem of terrorism during Radical Reconstruction. If you had been an adviser to President Grant, how would you propose to deal with the problem?

**Glossary**

carpetbagger

a term used for northerners working in the South during Reconstruction; it implied that these were opportunists who came south for economic or political gain

#### Compromise of 1877

the agreement between Republicans and Democrats, after the contested election of 1876, in which Rutherford B. Hayes was awarded the presidency in exchange for withdrawing the last of the federal troops from the South

#### crop-lien system

a loan system in which store owners extended credit to farmers for the purchase of goods in exchange for a portion of their future crops

#### Ku Klux Klan

a white vigilante organization that engaged in terroristic violence with the aim of stopping Reconstruction

#### redeemers

a term used for southern whites committed to rolling back the gains of Reconstruction

#### scalawags

a pejorative term used for southern whites who supported Reconstruction

#### sharecropping

a crop-lien system in which people paid rent on land they farmed (but did not own) with the crops they grew



## Chapter 20: The African American “Great Migration” and New European Immigration

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the factors that prompted African American and European immigration to American cities in the late nineteenth century
- Explain the discrimination and anti-immigration legislation that immigrants faced in the late nineteenth century

New cities were populated with diverse waves of new arrivals, who came to the cities to seek work in the businesses and factories there. While a small percentage of these newcomers were white Americans seeking jobs, most were made up of two groups that had not previously been factors in the urbanization movement: African Americans fleeing the racism of the farms and former plantations in the South, and southern and eastern European immigrants. These new immigrants supplanted the previous waves of northern and western European immigrants, who had tended to move west to purchase land. Unlike their predecessors, the newer immigrants lacked the funds to strike out to the western lands and instead remained in the urban centers where they arrived, seeking any work that would keep them alive.

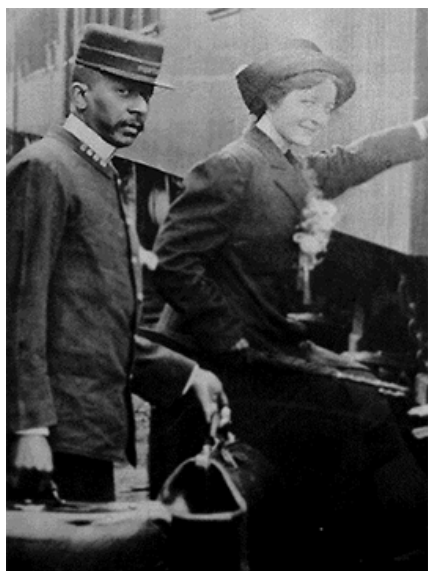
### THE AFRICAN AMERICAN “GREAT MIGRATION”

Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Depression, nearly two million African Americans fled the rural South to seek new opportunities elsewhere. While some moved west, the vast majority of this **Great Migration**, as the large exodus of African Americans leaving the South in the early twentieth century was called, traveled to the Northeast and Upper Midwest. The following cities were the primary destinations for these African Americans: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Indianapolis. These eight cities accounted for over two-thirds of the total population of the African American migration.

A combination of both “push” and “pull” factors played a role in this movement. Despite the end of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution (ensuring freedom, the right to vote regardless of race, and equal protection under the law, respectively), African Americans were still subjected to intense racial hatred. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War led to increased death threats, violence, and a wave of lynchings. Even after the formal dismantling of the Klan in the late 1870s, racially motivated violence continued. According to researchers at the Tuskegee Institute, there were thirty-five hundred racially motivated lynchings and other murders committed in the South between 1865 and 1900. For African Americans fleeing this culture of violence, northern and midwestern cities offered an opportunity to escape the dangers of the South.

In addition to this “push” out of the South, African Americans were also “pulled” to the cities by factors that attracted them, including job opportunities, where they could earn a wage rather than be tied to a landlord, and the chance to vote (for men, at least), supposedly free from the threat of violence. Although many lacked the funds to move themselves north, factory owners and other businesses that sought cheap labor assisted the migration. Often, the men moved first then sent for their families once they were ensconced in their new city life. Racism and a lack of formal education relegated these African American workers to many of the lower-paying unskilled or

semi-skilled occupations. More than 80 percent of African American men worked menial jobs in steel mills, mines, construction, and meat packing. In the railroad industry, they were often employed as porters or servants ([link](#)). In other businesses, they worked as janitors, waiters, or cooks. African American women, who faced discrimination due to both their race and gender, found a few job opportunities in the garment industry or laundries, but were more often employed as maids and domestic servants. Regardless of the status of their jobs, however, African Americans earned higher wages in the North than they did for the same occupations in the South, and typically found housing to be more available.



(a)



(b)

African American men who moved north as part of the Great Migration were often consigned to menial employment, such as working in construction or as porters on the railways (a), such as in the celebrated Pullman dining and sleeping cars (b).

However, such economic gains were offset by the higher cost of living in the North, especially in terms of rent, food costs, and other essentials. As a result, African Americans often found themselves living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, much like the tenement slums in which European immigrants lived in the cities. For newly arrived African Americans, even those who sought out the cities for the opportunities they provided, life in these urban centers was exceedingly difficult. They quickly learned that racial discrimination did not end at the Mason-Dixon Line, but continued to flourish in the North as well as the South. European immigrants, also seeking a better life in the cities of the United States, resented the arrival of the African Americans, whom they feared would compete for the same jobs or offer to work at lower wages. Landlords frequently discriminated against them; their rapid influx into the cities created severe housing shortages and even more overcrowded tenements. Homeowners in traditionally white

neighborhoods later entered into covenants in which they agreed not to sell to African American buyers; they also often fled neighborhoods into which African Americans had gained successful entry. In addition, some bankers practiced mortgage discrimination, later known as “redlining,” in order to deny home loans to qualified buyers. Such pervasive discrimination led to a concentration of African Americans in some of the worst slum areas of most major metropolitan cities, a problem that remained ongoing throughout most of the twentieth century.

So why move to the North, given that the economic challenges they faced were similar to those that African Americans encountered in the South? The answer lies in noneconomic gains. Greater educational opportunities and more expansive personal freedoms mattered greatly to the African Americans who made the trek northward during the Great Migration. State legislatures and local school districts allocated more funds for the education of both blacks and whites in the North, and also enforced compulsory school attendance laws more rigorously. Similarly, unlike the South where a simple gesture (or lack of a deferential one) could result in physical harm to the African American who committed it, life in larger, crowded northern urban centers permitted a degree of anonymity—and with it, personal freedom—that enabled African Americans to move, work, and speak without deferring to every white person with whom they crossed paths. Psychologically, these gains more than offset the continued economic challenges that black migrants faced.

### THE CHANGING NATURE OF EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION

Immigrants also shifted the demographics of the rapidly growing cities. Although immigration had always been a force of change in the United States, it took on a new character in the late nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1880s, the arrival of immigrants from mostly southern and eastern European countries rapidly increased while the flow from northern and western Europe remained relatively constant ([link](#)).

Region Country	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Northern and Western Europe	4,845,679	5,499,889	7,288,917	7,204,649	7,306,325
Germany	1,690,533	1,966,742	2,784,894	2,663,418	2,311,237
Ireland	1,855,827	1,854,571	1,871,509	1,615,459	1,352,251
England	550,924	662,676	908,141	840,513	877,719
Sweden	97,332	194,337	478,041	582,014	665,207

<b>Region Country</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>1880</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>
Austria	30,508	38,663	123,271	275,907	626,341
Norway	114,246	181,729	322,665	336,388	403,877
Scotland	140,835	170,136	242,231	233,524	261,076
Southern and Eastern Europe	93,824	248,620	728,851	1,674,648	4,500,932
Italy	17,157	44,230	182,580	484,027	1,343,125
Russia	4,644	35,722	182,644	423,726	1,184,412
Poland	14,436	48,557	147,440	383,407	937,884
Hungary	3,737	11,526	62,435	145,714	495,609
Czechoslovakia	40,289	85,361	118,106	156,891	219,214

Cumulative Total of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 1870–1910 (by major country of birth and European region)

The previous waves of immigrants from northern and western Europe, particularly Germany, Great Britain, and the Nordic countries, were relatively well off, arriving in the country with some funds and often moving to the newly settled western territories. In contrast, the newer immigrants from southern and eastern European countries, including Italy, Greece, and several Slavic countries including Russia, came over due to “push” and “pull” factors similar to those that influenced the African Americans arriving from the South. Many were “pushed” from their countries by a series of ongoing famines, by the need to escape religious, political, or racial persecution, or by the desire to avoid compulsory military service. They were also “pulled” by the promise of consistent, wage-earning work.

Whatever the reason, these immigrants arrived without the education and finances of the earlier waves of immigrants, and settled more readily in the port towns where they arrived, rather than setting out to seek their fortunes in the West. By 1890, over 80 percent of the population of New York would be either foreign-born or children of foreign-born parentage. Other cities saw huge spikes in foreign populations as well, though not to the same degree, due in large part to Ellis Island in New York City being the primary port of entry for most European immigrants arriving in the United States.

The number of immigrants peaked between 1900 and 1910, when over nine million people arrived in the United States. To assist in the processing and management of this massive wave of immigrants, the Bureau of Immigration in New York City, which had become the official port of entry, opened Ellis Island in 1892. Today, nearly half of all Americans have ancestors who, at

some point in time, entered the country through the portal at Ellis Island. Doctors or nurses inspected the immigrants upon arrival, looking for any signs of infectious diseases ([link](#)). Most immigrants were admitted to the country with only a cursory glance at any other paperwork. Roughly 2 percent of the arriving immigrants were denied entry due to a medical condition or criminal history. The rest would enter the country by way of the streets of New York, many unable to speak English and totally reliant on finding those who spoke their native tongue.



This photo shows newly arrived immigrants at Ellis Island in New York.

Inspectors are examining them for contagious health problems, which could require them to be sent back. (credit: NIAID)

Seeking comfort in a strange land, as well as a common language, many immigrants sought out relatives, friends, former neighbors, townspeople, and countrymen who had already settled in American cities. This led to a rise in ethnic enclaves within the larger city. Little Italy, Chinatown, and many other communities developed in which immigrant groups could find everything to remind them of home, from local language newspapers to ethnic food stores. While these enclaves provided a sense of community to their members, they added to the problems of urban congestion, particularly in the poorest slums where immigrants could afford housing.

**Note:**

This Library of Congress exhibit on [the history of Jewish immigration](#) to the United States illustrates the ongoing challenge immigrants felt between the ties to their old land and a love for America.

The demographic shift at the turn of the century was later confirmed by the Dillingham Commission, created by Congress in 1907 to report on the nature of immigration in America; the commission reinforced this ethnic identification of immigrants and their simultaneous discrimination. The report put it simply: These newer immigrants looked and acted differently. They had darker skin tone, spoke languages with which most Americans were unfamiliar, and practiced unfamiliar religions, specifically Judaism and Catholicism. Even the foods they sought out at butchers and grocery stores set immigrants apart. Because of these easily identifiable differences, new immigrants became easy targets for hatred and discrimination. If jobs were hard to find, or if housing was overcrowded, it became easy to blame the immigrants. Like African Americans, immigrants in cities were blamed for the problems of the day.

Growing numbers of Americans resented the waves of new immigrants, resulting in a backlash. The Reverend Josiah Strong fueled the hatred and discrimination in his bestselling book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, published in 1885. In a revised edition that reflected the 1890 census records, he clearly identified undesirable immigrants—those from southern and eastern European countries—as a key threat to the moral fiber of the country, and urged all good Americans to face the challenge. Several thousand Americans answered his call by forming the American Protective Association, the chief political activist group to promote legislation curbing immigration into the United States. The group successfully lobbied Congress to adopt both an English language literacy test for immigrants, which eventually passed in 1917, and the Chinese Exclusion Act (discussed in a previous chapter). The group’s political lobbying also laid the groundwork for the subsequent Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924, as well as the National Origins Act.

**Note:**

The [global timeline of immigration](#) at the Library of Congress offers a summary of immigration policies and the groups affected by it, as well as a compelling overview of different ethnic groups’ immigration stories. Browse through to see how different ethnic groups made their way in the United States.

## Section Summary

For both African Americans migrating from the postwar South and immigrants arriving from southeastern Europe, a combination of “push” and “pull” factors influenced their migration to America’s urban centers. African Americans moved away from the racial violence and limited opportunities that existed in the rural South, seeking wages and steady work, as well as the opportunity to vote safely as free men; however, they quickly learned that racial discrimination and violence were not limited to the South. For European immigrants, famine and persecution led them to seek a new life in the United States, where, the stories said, the streets were paved in gold. Of course, in northeastern and midwestern cities, both groups found a more challenging welcome than they had anticipated. City residents blamed recent arrivals for the ills of the cities, from overcrowding to a rise in crime. Activist groups pushed for anti-immigration legislation, seeking to limit the waves of immigrants that sought a better future in the United States.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Why did African Americans consider moving from the rural South to the urban North following the Civil War?

- A. to be able to buy land
- B. to avoid slavery
- C. to find wage-earning work
- D. to further their education

---

#### Solution:

C

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following is true of late nineteenth-century southern and eastern European immigrants, as opposed to their western and northern European predecessors?

- A. Southern and eastern European immigrants tended to be wealthier.
- B. Southern and eastern European immigrants were, on the whole, more skilled and able to find better paying employment.
- C. Many southern and eastern European immigrants acquired land in the West, while western and northern European immigrants tended to remain in urban centers.
- D. Ellis Island was the first destination for most southern and eastern Europeans.

---

#### Solution:

D

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What made recent European immigrants the ready targets of more established city dwellers? What was the result of this discrimination?

---

#### Solution:

Newer immigrants often had different appearances, spoke unfamiliar languages, and lived their lives—from the religions they practiced to the food they ate—in ways that were alien to many Americans. In all of city life's more challenging aspects, from competition for jobs to overcrowding in scarce housing, immigrants became easy scapegoats. The Reverend

Josiah Strong's bestselling book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*, fueled this discrimination. The American Protective Association, the chief political activist group promoting anti-immigration legislation, formed largely in response to Strong's call.

## **Glossary**

### **Great Migration**

the name for the large wave of African Americans who left the South after the Civil War, mostly moving to cities in the Northeast and Upper Midwest



## Chapter 21: New Voices for Women and African Americans

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Understand the origins and growth of the women's rights movement
- Identify the different strands of the early African American civil rights movement

The Progressive drive for a more perfect democracy and social justice also fostered the growth of two new movements that attacked the oldest and most long-standing betrayals of the American promise of equal opportunity and citizenship—the disfranchisement of women and civil rights for African Americans. African Americans across the nation identified an agenda for civil rights and economic opportunity during the Progressive Era, but they disagreed strongly on how to meet these goals in the face of universal discrimination and disfranchisement, segregation, and racial violence in the South. And beginning in the late nineteenth century, the women's movement cultivated a cadre of new leaders, national organizations, and competing rationales for women's rights—especially the right to vote.

### **LEADERS EMERGE IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

Women like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley were instrumental in the early Progressive settlement house movement, and female leaders dominated organizations such as the WCTU and the Anti-Saloon League. From these earlier efforts came new leaders who, in their turn, focused their efforts on the key goal of the Progressive Era as it pertained to women: the right to vote.

Women had first formulated their demand for the right to vote in the Declaration of Sentiments at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, and saw their first opportunity of securing suffrage during Reconstruction when legislators—driven by racial animosity—sought to enfranchise women to counter the votes of black men following the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. By 1900, the western frontier states of Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming had already responded to women's movements with the right to vote in state and local elections,

regardless of gender. They conceded to the suffragists' demands, partly in order to attract more women to these male-dominated regions. But women's lives in the West also rarely fit with the nineteenth-century ideology of "separate spheres" that had legitimized the exclusion of women from the rough-and-tumble party competitions of public politics. In 1890, the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) organized several hundred state and local chapters to urge the passage of a federal amendment to guarantee a woman's right to vote. Its leaders, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, were veterans of the women's suffrage movement and had formulated the first demand for the right to vote at Seneca Falls in 1848 ([\[link\]](#)). Under the subsequent leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, beginning in 1900, the group decided to make suffrage its first priority. Soon, its membership began to grow. Using modern marketing efforts like celebrity endorsements to attract a younger audience, the NAWSA became a significant political pressure group for the passage of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



Women suffragists in Ohio sought to educate and convince men that they should support a woman's rights to vote. As the feature below on the backlash against

suffragists illustrates, it was a far from simple task.

For some in the NAWSA, however, the pace of change was too slow. Frustrated with the lack of response by state and national legislators, Alice Paul, who joined the organization in 1912, sought to expand the scope of the organization as well as to adopt more direct protest tactics to draw greater media attention. When others in the group were unwilling to move in her direction, Paul split from the NAWSA to create the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, later renamed the National Woman's Party, in 1913. Known as the **Silent Sentinels** ([\[link\]](#)), Paul and her group picketed outside the White House for nearly two years, starting in 1917. In the latter stages of their protests, many women, including Paul, were arrested and thrown in jail, where they staged a hunger strike as self-proclaimed political prisoners. Prison guards ultimately force-fed Paul to keep her alive. At a time—during World War I—when women volunteered as army nurses, worked in vital defense industries, and supported Wilson's campaign to “make the world safe for democracy,” the scandalous mistreatment of Paul embarrassed President Woodrow Wilson. Enlightened to the injustice toward all American women, he changed his position in support of a woman's constitutional right to vote.



Alice Paul and her Silent Sentinels picketed outside the

White House for almost two years, and, when arrested, went on hunger strike until they were force-fed in order to save their lives.

While Catt and Paul used different strategies, their combined efforts brought enough pressure to bear for Congress to pass the Nineteenth Amendment, which prohibited voter discrimination on the basis of sex, during a special session in the summer of 1919. Subsequently, the required thirty-six states approved its adoption, with Tennessee doing so in August of 1920, in time for that year's presidential election.

**Note:**

**The Anti-Suffragist Movement**

The early suffragists may have believed that the right to vote was a universal one, but they faced waves of discrimination and ridicule from both men and women. The image below ([\[link\]](#)) shows one of the organizations pushing back against the suffragist movement, but much of the anti-suffrage campaign was carried out through ridiculing postcards and signs that showed suffragists as sexually wanton, grasping, irresponsible, or impossibly ugly. Men in anti-suffragist posters were depicted as henpecked, crouching to clean the floor, while their suffragist wives marched out the door to campaign for the vote. They also showed cartoons of women gambling, drinking, and smoking cigars, that is, taking on men's vices, once they gained voting rights.



The anti-suffrage group used ridicule and embarrassment to try and sway the public away from supporting a woman's right to vote.

Other anti-suffragists believed that women could better influence the country from outside the realm of party politics, through their clubs, petitions, and churches. Many women also opposed women's suffrage because they thought the dirty world of politics was a morass to which ladies should not be exposed. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage formed in 1911; around the country, state representatives used the organization's speakers, funds, and literature to promote the anti-suffragist cause. As the link below illustrates, the suffragists endured much prejudice and backlash in their push for equal rights.

**Note:**

Browse this [collection of anti-suffragist cartoons](#) to see examples of the stereotypes and fear-mongering that the anti-suffragist campaign promoted.

## LEADERS EMERGE IN THE EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Racial mob violence against African Americans permeated much of the “New South”—and, to a lesser extent, the West, where Mexican Americans and other immigrant groups also suffered severe discrimination and violence—by the late nineteenth century. The Ku Klux Klan and a system of Jim Crow laws governed much of the South (discussed in a previous chapter). White middle-class reformers were appalled at the violence of race relations in the nation but typically shared the belief in racial characteristics and the superiority of Anglo-Saxon whites over African Americans, Asians, “ethnic” Europeans, Indians, and Latin American populations. Southern reformers considered segregation a Progressive solution to racial violence; across the nation, educated middle-class Americans enthusiastically followed the work of eugenicists who identified virtually all human behavior as inheritable traits and issued awards at county fairs to families and individuals for their “racial fitness.” It was against this tide that African American leaders developed their own voice in the Progressive Era, working along diverse paths to improve the lives and conditions of African Americans throughout the country.

Born into slavery in Virginia in 1856, Booker T. Washington became an influential African American leader at the outset of the Progressive Era. In 1881, he became the first principal for the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama, a position he held until he died in 1915. Tuskegee was an all-black “normal school”—an old term for a teachers’ college—teaching African Americans a curriculum geared towards practical skills such as cooking, farming, and housekeeping. Graduates would often then travel through the South, teaching new farming and industrial techniques to rural communities. Washington extolled the school’s graduates to focus on the black community’s self-improvement and prove that they were productive members of society even in freedom—something white Americans throughout the nation had always doubted.

In a speech delivered at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895, which was meant to promote the economy of a “New South,” Washington proposed what came to be known as the **Atlanta**

**Compromise** ([\[link\]](#)). Speaking to a racially mixed audience, Washington called upon African Americans to work diligently for their own uplift and prosperity rather than preoccupy themselves with political and civil rights. Their success and hard work, he implied, would eventually convince southern whites to grant these rights. Not surprisingly, most whites liked Washington's model of race relations, since it placed the burden of change on blacks and required nothing of them. Wealthy industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller provided funding for many of Washington's self-help programs, as did Sears, Roebuck & Co. co-founder Julius Rosenwald, and Washington was the first African American invited to the White House by President Roosevelt in 1901. At the same time, his message also appealed to many in the black community, and some attribute this widespread popularity to his consistent message that social and economic growth, even within a segregated society, would do more for African Americans than an all-out agitation for equal rights on all fronts.



In Booker T. Washington's speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, he urged his audience to "cast down your bucket where you are" and make friends with the people around them.



**Note:**

Visit George Mason University's History Matters website for the text and audio of Booker T. Washington's famous [Atlanta Compromise](#) speech.

Yet, many African Americans disagreed with Washington's approach. Much in the same manner that Alice Paul felt the pace of the struggle for women's rights was moving too slowly under the NAWSA, some within the African American community felt that immediate agitation for the rights guaranteed under the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, established during the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, was necessary. In 1905, a group of prominent civil rights leaders, led by W. E. B. Du Bois, met in a small hotel on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls—where segregation laws did not bar them from hotel accommodations—to discuss what immediate steps were needed for equal rights ([link](#)). Du Bois, a professor at the all-black Atlanta University and the first African American with a doctorate from Harvard, emerged as the prominent spokesperson for what would later be dubbed the **Niagara Movement**. By 1905, he had grown wary of Booker T. Washington's calls for African Americans to accommodate white racism and focus solely on self-improvement. Du Bois, and others alongside him, wished to carve a more direct path towards equality that drew on the political leadership and litigation skills of the black, educated elite, which he termed the "talented tenth."





This photo of the Niagara Movement shows W. E. B.

Du Bois seated in the second row, center, in the white hat. The proud and self-confident postures of this group stood in marked contrast to the humility that Booker T. Washington urged of blacks.

At the meeting, Du Bois led the others in drafting the “Declaration of Principles,” which called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. These rights included universal suffrage, compulsory education, and the elimination of the convict lease system in which tens of thousands of blacks had endured slavery-like conditions in southern road construction, mines, prisons, and penal farms since the end of Reconstruction. Within a year, Niagara chapters had sprung up in twenty-one states across the country. By 1908, internal fights over the role of

women in the fight for African American equal rights lessened the interest in the Niagara Movement. But the movement laid the groundwork for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909. Du Bois served as the influential director of publications for the NAACP from its inception until 1933. As the editor of the journal *The Crisis*, Du Bois had a platform to express his views on a variety of issues facing African Americans in the later Progressive Era, as well as during World War I and its aftermath.

In both Washington and Du Bois, African Americans found leaders to push forward the fight for their place in the new century, each with a very different strategy. Both men cultivated ground for a new generation of African American spokespeople and leaders who would then pave the road to the modern civil rights movement after World War II.

## **Section Summary**

The Progressive commitment to promoting democracy and social justice created an environment within which the movements for women's and African American rights grew and flourished. Emergent leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alice Paul spread the cause of woman suffrage, drawing in other activists and making the case for a constitutional amendment ensuring a woman's right to vote. African Americans—guided by leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois—strove for civil rights and economic opportunity, although their philosophies and strategies differed significantly. In the women's and civil rights movements alike, activists both advanced their own causes and paved the way for later efforts aimed at expanding equal opportunity and citizenship.

## **Review Questions**

### **Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Which of the following was *not* a feature of Booker T. Washington's strategy to improve the lives of African Americans?

- A. self-help
- B. accommodating/tolerating white racism
- C. immediate protests for equal rights
- D. learning new trades/skills

---

**Solution:**

C

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** Who were the "Silent Sentinels"?

- A. a group of progressive African Americans who drafted the Declaration of Principles
- B. anti-suffrage women
- C. an offshoot of the Industrial Workers of the World
- D. suffragists who protested outside the White House

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Describe the philosophy and strategies of the Niagara Movement. How did it differ from Washington's way of thinking?

---

**Solution:**

W. E. B. Du Bois sought to push for civil rights directly, through legal and political channels, drawing on the education and skills of the “talented tenth” to advance the Niagara Movement’s agenda. The movement’s Declaration of Principles called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans, including universal suffrage, education, and an end to the convict-lease system. This represented, in many ways, a rejection of Booker T. Washington’s advocacy of accommodation and self-improvement.

## **Glossary**

### **Atlanta Compromise**

Booker T. Washington’s speech, given at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, where he urged African Americans to work hard and get along with others in their white communities, so as to earn the goodwill of the country

### **NAACP**

the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights organization formed in 1909 by an interracial coalition including W. E. B. Du Bois and Florence Kelley

### **Niagara Movement**

a campaign led by W. E. B. Du Bois and other prominent African American reformers that departed from Booker T. Washington's model of accommodation and advocated for a “Declaration of Principles” that called for immediate political, social, and economic equality for African Americans

### **Silent Sentinels**

women protesters who picketed the White House for years to protest for women’s right to vote; they went on a hunger strike after their arrest, and their force-feeding became a national scandal

## Chapter 22: A New Home Front

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the status of organized labor changed during the First World War
- Describe how the lives of women and African Americans changed as a result of American participation in World War I
- Explain how America's participation in World War I allowed for the passage of prohibition and women's suffrage

The lives of all Americans, whether they went abroad to fight or stayed on the home front, changed dramatically during the war. Restrictive laws censored dissent at home, and the armed forces demanded unconditional loyalty from millions of volunteers and conscripted soldiers. For organized labor, women, and African Americans in particular, the war brought changes to the prewar status quo. Some white women worked outside of the home for the first time, whereas others, like African American men, found that they were eligible for jobs that had previously been reserved for white men. African American women, too, were able to seek employment beyond the domestic servant jobs that had been their primary opportunity. These new options and freedoms were not easily erased after the war ended.

### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES BORN FROM WAR**

After decades of limited involvement in the challenges between management and organized labor, the need for peaceful and productive industrial relations prompted the federal government during wartime to invite organized labor to the negotiating table. Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), sought to capitalize on these circumstances to better organize workers and secure for them better wages and working conditions. His efforts also solidified his own base of power. The increase in production that the war required exposed severe labor shortages in many states, a condition that was further exacerbated by the draft, which pulled millions of young men from the active labor force.

Wilson only briefly investigated the longstanding animosity between labor and management before ordering the creation of the National Labor War

Board in April 1918. Quick negotiations with Gompers and the AFL resulted in a promise: Organized labor would make a “no-strike pledge” for the duration of the war, in exchange for the U.S. government’s protection of workers’ rights to organize and bargain collectively. The federal government kept its promise and promoted the adoption of an eight-hour workday (which had first been adopted by government employees in 1868), a living wage for all workers, and union membership. As a result, union membership skyrocketed during the war, from 2.6 million members in 1916 to 4.1 million in 1919. In short, American workers received better working conditions and wages, as a result of the country’s participation in the war. However, their economic gains were limited. While prosperity overall went up during the war, it was enjoyed more by business owners and corporations than by the workers themselves. Even though wages increased, inflation offset most of the gains. Prices in the United States increased an average of 15–20 percent annually between 1917 and 1920. Individual purchasing power actually declined during the war due to the substantially higher cost of living. Business profits, in contrast, increased by nearly a third during the war.

## **Women in Wartime**

For women, the economic situation was complicated by the war, with the departure of wage-earning men and the higher cost of living pushing many toward less comfortable lives. At the same time, however, wartime presented new opportunities for women in the workplace. More than one million women entered the workforce for the first time as a result of the war, while more than eight million working women found higher paying jobs, often in industry. Many women also found employment in what were typically considered male occupations, such as on the railroads ([\[link\]](#)), where the number of women tripled, and on assembly lines. After the war ended and men returned home and searched for work, women were fired from their jobs, and expected to return home and care for their families. Furthermore, even when they were doing men’s jobs, women were typically paid lower wages than male workers, and unions were ambivalent at best—and hostile at worst—to women workers. Even under these circumstances, wartime employment familiarized women with an alternative to a life in

domesticity and dependency, making a life of employment, even a career, plausible for women. When, a generation later, World War II arrived, this trend would increase dramatically.



(a)



(b)

The war brought new opportunities to women, such as the training offered to those who joined the Land Army (a) or the opening up of traditionally male occupations. In 1918, Eva Abbott (b) was one of many new women workers on the Erie Railroad. However, once the war ended and veterans returned home, these opportunities largely disappeared. (credit b: modification of work by U.S. Department of Labor)

One notable group of women who exploited these new opportunities was the Women's Land Army of America. First during World War I, then again in World War II, these women stepped up to run farms and other

agricultural enterprises, as men left for the armed forces ([\[link\]](#)). Known as Farmerettes, some twenty thousand women—mostly college educated and from larger urban areas—served in this capacity. Their reasons for joining were manifold. For some, it was a way to serve their country during a time of war. Others hoped to capitalize on the efforts to further the fight for women's suffrage.

Also of special note were the approximately thirty thousand American women who served in the military, as well as a variety of humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross and YMCA, during the war. In addition to serving as military nurses (without rank), American women also served as telephone operators in France. Of this latter group, 230 of them, known as "Hello Girls," were bilingual and stationed in combat areas. Over eighteen thousand American women served as Red Cross nurses, providing much of the medical support available to American troops in France. Close to three hundred nurses died during service. Many of those who returned home continued to work in hospitals and home healthcare, helping wounded veterans heal both emotionally and physically from the scars of war.

### **African Americans in the Crusade for Democracy**

African Americans also found that the war brought upheaval and opportunity. Blacks composed 13 percent of the enlisted military, with 350,000 men serving. Colonel Charles Young of the Tenth Cavalry division served as the highest-ranking African American officer. Blacks served in segregated units and suffered from widespread racism in the military hierarchy, often serving in menial or support roles. Some troops saw combat, however, and were commended for serving with valor. The 369th Infantry, for example, known as the **Harlem Hellfighters**, served on the frontline of France for six months, longer than any other American unit. One hundred seventy-one men from that regiment received the Legion of Merit for meritorious service in combat. The regiment marched in a homecoming parade in New York City, was remembered in paintings ([\[link\]](#)), and was celebrated for bravery and leadership. The accolades given to them, however, in no way extended to the bulk of African Americans fighting in the war.





African American soldiers suffered under segregation and second-class treatment in the military. Still, the 369th Infantry earned recognition and reward for its valor in service both in France and the United States.

On the home front, African Americans, like American women, saw economic opportunities increase during the war. During the so-called Great Migration (discussed in a previous chapter), nearly 350,000 African Americans had fled the post-Civil War South for opportunities in northern urban areas. From 1910–1920, they moved north and found work in the steel, mining, shipbuilding, and automotive industries, among others. African American women also sought better employment opportunities beyond their traditional roles as domestic servants. By 1920, over 100,000 women had found work in diverse manufacturing industries, up from 70,000 in 1910. Despite such opportunities, racism continued to be a major force in both the North and South. Worried about the large influx of black Americans into their cities, several municipalities passed residential codes designed to prohibit African Americans from settling in certain neighborhoods. Race riots also increased in frequency: In 1917 alone, there were race riots in twenty-five cities, including East Saint Louis, where thirty-nine blacks were killed. In the South, white business and plantation owners feared that their cheap workforce was fleeing the region, and used

violence to intimidate blacks into staying. According to NAACP statistics, recorded incidences of lynching increased from thirty-eight in 1917 to eighty-three in 1919. These numbers did not start to decrease until 1923, when the number of annual lynchings dropped below thirty-five for the first time since the Civil War.

**Note:**

Explore photographs and a written overview of [the African American experience](#) both at home and on the front line during World War I.

## THE LAST VESTIGES OF PROGRESSIVISM

Across the United States, the war intersected with the last lingering efforts of the Progressives who sought to use the war as motivation for their final push for change. It was in large part due to the war's influence that Progressives were able to lobby for the passage of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting alcohol, and the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, received their final impetus due to the war effort.

**Prohibition**, as the anti-alcohol movement became known, had been a goal of many Progressives for decades. Organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League linked alcohol consumption with any number of societal problems, and they had worked tirelessly with municipalities and counties to limit or prohibit alcohol on a local scale. But with the war, prohibitionists saw an opportunity for federal action. One factor that helped their cause was the strong anti-German sentiment that gripped the country, which turned sympathy away from the largely German-descended immigrants who ran the breweries. Furthermore, the public cry to ration food and grain—the latter being a key ingredient in both beer and hard alcohol—made prohibition even more patriotic. Congress ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in January 1919, with provisions to take effect one year later. Specifically, the amendment prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors.

It did not prohibit the drinking of alcohol, as there was a widespread feeling that such language would be viewed as too intrusive on personal rights. However, by eliminating the manufacture, sale, and transport of such beverages, drinking was effectively outlawed. Shortly thereafter, Congress passed the Volstead Act, translating the Eighteenth Amendment into an enforceable ban on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and regulating the scientific and industrial uses of alcohol. The act also specifically excluded from prohibition the use of alcohol for religious rituals ([\[link\]](#)).



Surrounded by prominent “dry workers,” Governor James P. Goodrich of Indiana signs a statewide bill to prohibit alcohol.

Unfortunately for proponents of the amendment, the ban on alcohol did not take effect until one full year following the end of the war. Almost immediately following the war, the general public began to oppose—and clearly violate—the law, making it very difficult to enforce. Doctors and druggists, who could prescribe whisky for medicinal purposes, found themselves inundated with requests. In the 1920s, organized crime and gangsters like Al Capone would capitalize on the persistent demand for

liquor, making fortunes in the illegal trade. A lack of enforcement, compounded by an overwhelming desire by the public to obtain alcohol at all costs, eventually resulted in the repeal of the law in 1933.

The First World War also provided the impetus for another longstanding goal of some reformers: universal suffrage. Supporters of equal rights for women pointed to Wilson's rallying cry of a war "to make the world safe for democracy," as hypocritical, saying he was sending American boys to die for such principles while simultaneously denying American women their democratic right to vote ([\[link\]](#)). Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Women Suffrage Movement, capitalized on the growing patriotic fervor to point out that every woman who gained the vote could exercise that right in a show of loyalty to the nation, thus offsetting the dangers of draft-dodgers or naturalized Germans who already had the right to vote.

Alice Paul, of the National Women's Party, organized more radical tactics, bringing national attention to the issue of women's suffrage by organizing protests outside the White House and, later, hunger strikes among arrested protesters. By the end of the war, the abusive treatment of suffragist hunger-strikers in prison, women's important contribution to the war effort, and the arguments of his suffragist daughter Jessie Woodrow Wilson Sayre moved President Wilson to understand women's right to vote as an ethical mandate for a true democracy. He began urging congressmen and senators to adopt the legislation. The amendment finally passed in June 1919, and the states ratified it by August 1920. Specifically, the Nineteenth Amendment prohibited all efforts to deny the right to vote on the basis of sex. It took effect in time for American women to vote in the presidential election of 1920.



Suffragists picketed the White House in 1917, leveraging the war and America's stance on democracy to urge Woodrow Wilson to support an amendment giving women the right to vote.

## Section Summary

The First World War remade the world for all Americans, whether they served abroad or stayed at home. For some groups, such as women and blacks, the war provided opportunities for advancement. As soldiers went to war, women and African Americans took on jobs that had previously been reserved for white men. In return for a no-strike pledge, workers gained the right to organize. Many of these shifts were temporary, however, and the end of the war came with a cultural expectation that the old social order would be reinstated.

Some reform efforts also proved short-lived. President Wilson's wartime agencies managed the wartime economy effectively but closed immediately with the end of the war (although they reappeared a short while later with

the New Deal). While patriotic fervor allowed Progressives to pass prohibition, the strong demand for alcohol made the law unsustainable. Women's suffrage, however, was a Progressive movement that came to fruition in part because of the circumstances of the war, and unlike prohibition, it remained.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

**Problem:** Why did the war not increase overall prosperity?

- A. because inflation made the cost of living higher
- B. because wages were lowered due to the war effort
- C. because workers had no bargaining power due to the “no-strike pledge”
- D. because women and African American men were paid less for the same work

---

### Solution:

A

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following did *not* influence the eventual passage of the Nineteenth Amendment?

- A. women's contributions to the war effort
- B. the dramatic tactics and harsh treatment of radical suffragists
- C. the passage of the Volstead Act
- D. the arguments of President Wilson's daughter

---

### Solution:

## C

### Exercise:

**Problem:** Why was prohibition's success short-lived?

---

### Solution:

The ban on alcohol did not take effect until one year after the war, when the public sentiments that had eased its passage began to wane. The law proved difficult to enforce, as ever-greater numbers of Americans began to defy it. Organized crime's involvement in the illegal liquor trade made enforcement even more difficult and the procurement of alcohol more dangerous. All of these elements led to the law's repeal in 1933.

## Glossary

### Harlem Hellfighters

a nickname for the decorated, all-black 369th Infantry, which served on the frontlines of France for six months, longer than any other American unit

### prohibition

the campaign for a ban on the sale and manufacturing of alcoholic beverages, which came to fruition during the war, bolstered by anti-German sentiment and a call to preserve resources for the war effort



## Chapter 23: A New Generation

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain the factors that shaped the new morality and the changing role of women in the United States during the 1920s
- Describe the “new Negro” and the influence of the Harlem Renaissance
- Analyze the effects of prohibition on American society and culture
- Describe the character and main authors of the Lost Generation

The 1920s was a time of dramatic change in the United States. Many young people, especially those living in big cities, embraced a new morality that was much more permissive than that of previous generations. They listened to jazz music, especially in the nightclubs of Harlem. Although prohibition outlawed alcohol, criminal bootlegging and importing businesses thrived. The decade was not a pleasure cruise for everyone, however; in the wake of the Great War, many were left awaiting the promise of a new generation.

### A NEW MORALITY

Many Americans were disillusioned in the post-World War I era, and their reactions took many forms. Rebellious American youth, in particular, adjusted to the changes by embracing a **new morality** that was far more permissive than the social mores of their parents. Many young women of the era shed their mother’s morality and adopted the dress and mannerisms of a **flapper**, the Jazz Age female stereotype, seeking the endless party. Flappers wore shorter skirts, shorter hair, and more makeup, and they drank and smoked with the boys ([\[link\]](#)). Flappers’ dresses emphasized straight lines from the shoulders to the knees, minimizing breasts and curves while highlighting legs and ankles. The male equivalent of a flapper was a “**sheik**,” although that term has not remained as strong in the American vernacular. At the time, however, many of these fads became a type of conformity, especially among college-aged youths, with the signature bob haircut of the flapper becoming almost universal—in both the United States and overseas.





The flapper look, seen here in “Flapper” by Ellen Pyle for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* in February 1922, was a national craze in American cities during the 1920s.

As men and women pushed social and cultural boundaries in the Jazz Age, sexual mores changed and social customs grew more permissive. “Petting parties” or “necking parties” became the rage on college campuses. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and British “sexologist” Havelock Ellis emphasized that sex was a natural and pleasurable part of the human experience. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, launched an information campaign on birth control to give women a choice in the realm in which suffrage had changed little—the family. The popularization of contraception and the private space that the automobile offered to

teenagers and unwed couples also contributed to changes in sexual behavior.

Flappers and sheiks also took their cues from the high-flying romances they saw on movie screens and confessions in movie magazines of immorality on movie sets. Movie posters promised: “Brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp.” And “neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers . . . the truth: bold, naked, sensational.”

**Note:**

Could you go “on a toot” with flappers and sheiks? Improve your chances with this [collection](#) of Jazz Age slang.

New dances and new music—especially jazz—also characterized the Jazz Age. Born out of the African American community, jazz was a uniquely American music. The innovative sound emerged from a number of different communities and from a number of different musical traditions such as blues and ragtime. By the 1920s, jazz had spread from African American clubs in New Orleans and Chicago to reach greater popularity in New York and abroad. One New York jazz establishment, the Cotton Club, became particularly famous and attracted large audiences of hip, young, and white flappers and sheiks to see black entertainers play jazz ([link](#)).



Black jazz bands such as the King and Carter Jazzing Orchestra, photographed in 1921 by Robert Runyon, were immensely popular among white urbanites in the 1920s.

## **THE “NEW WOMAN”**

The Jazz Age and the proliferation of the flapper lifestyle of the 1920s should not be seen merely as the product of postwar disillusionment and newfound prosperity. Rather, the search for new styles of dress and new forms of entertainment like jazz was part of a larger women’s rights movement. The early 1920s, especially with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteeing full voting rights to women, was a period that witnessed the expansion of women’s political power. The public flaunting of social and sexual norms by flappers represented an attempt to match gains in political equality with gains in the social sphere. Women were increasingly leaving the Victorian era norms of the previous generation behind, as they broadened the concept of women’s liberation to include new forms of social expression such as dance, fashion, women’s clubs, and forays into college and the professions.

Nor did the struggle for women's rights through the promotion and passage of legislation cease in the 1920s. In 1921, Congress passed the Promotion of the Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy Act, also known as the Sheppard-Towner Act, which earmarked \$1.25 million for well-baby clinics and educational programs, as well as nursing. This funding dramatically reduced the rate of infant mortality. Two years later, in 1923, Alice Paul drafted and promoted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that promised to end all sex discrimination by guaranteeing that "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."

Yet, ironically, at precisely the time when the Progressive movement was achieving its long-sought-after goals, the movement itself was losing steam and the Progressive Era was coming to a close. As the heat of Progressive politics grew less intense, voter participation from both sexes declined over the course of the 1920s. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, many women believed that they had accomplished their goals and dropped out of the movement. As a result, the proposed ERA stalled (the ERA eventually passed Congress almost fifty years later in 1972, but then failed to win ratification by a sufficient number of states), and, by the end of the 1920s, Congress even allowed funding for the Sheppard-Towner Act to lapse.

The growing lethargy toward women's rights was happening at a time when an increasing number of women were working for wages in the U.S. economy—not only in domestic service, but in retail, healthcare and education, offices, and manufacturing. Beginning in the 1920s, women's participation in the labor force increased steadily. However, most were paid less than men for the same type of work based on the rationale that they did not have to support a family. While the employment of single and unmarried women had largely won social acceptance, married women often suffered the stigma that they were working for pin money—frivolous additional discretionary income.

## **THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE AND THE NEW NEGRO**

It wasn't only women who found new forms of expression in the 1920s. African Americans were also expanding their horizons and embracing the concept of the "new Negro." The decade witnessed the continued Great Migration of African Americans to the North, with over half a million fleeing the strict Jim Crow laws of the South. Life in the northern states, as many African Americans discovered, was hardly free of discrimination and segregation. Even without Jim Crow, businesses, property owners, employers, and private citizens typically practiced *de facto* segregation, which could be quite stifling and oppressive. Nonetheless, many southern blacks continued to move north into segregated neighborhoods that were already bursting at the seams, because the North, at the very least, offered two tickets toward black progress: schools and the vote. The black population of New York City doubled during the decade. As a result, Harlem, a neighborhood at the northern end of Manhattan, became a center for Afro-centric art, music, poetry, and politics. Political expression in the Harlem of the 1920s ran the gamut, as some leaders advocated a return to Africa, while others fought for inclusion and integration.

Revived by the wartime migration and fired up by the white violence of the postwar riots, urban blacks developed a strong cultural expression in the 1920s that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. In this rediscovery of black culture, African American artists and writers formulated an independent black culture and encouraged racial pride, rejecting any emulation of white American culture. Claude McKay's poem "If We Must Die" called on African Americans to start fighting back in the wake of the Red Summer riots of 1919 (discussed in a previous chapter, [\[link\]](#)). Langston Hughes, often nicknamed the "poet laureate" of the movement, invoked sacrifice and the just cause of civil rights in "The Colored Soldier," while another author of the movement, Zora Neale Hurston, celebrated the life and dialect of rural blacks in a fictional, all-black town in Florida. Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was only published posthumously in 1937.



The Jamaican-born poet and novelist Claude McKay articulated the new sense of self and urban community of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. Although centered in the Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, this cultural movement emerged in urban centers throughout the Northeast and Midwest.

The new Negro found political expression in a political ideology that celebrated African Americans distinct national identity. This **Negro nationalism**, as some referred to it, proposed that African Americans had a

distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community. An early proponent of such nationalism was W. E. B. Du Bois. One of the founders of the NAACP, a brilliant writer and scholar, and the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard, Du Bois openly rejected assumptions of white supremacy. His conception of Negro nationalism encouraged Africans to work together in support of their own interests, promoted the elevation of black literature and cultural expression, and, most famously, embraced the African continent as the true homeland of all ethnic Africans—a concept known as Pan-Africanism.

Taking Negro nationalism to a new level was Marcus Garvey. Like many black Americans, the Jamaican immigrant had become utterly disillusioned with the prospect of overcoming white racism in the United States in the wake of the postwar riots and promoted a “Back to Africa” movement. To return African Americans to a presumably more welcoming home in Africa, Garvey founded the **Black Star Steamship Line**. He also started the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which attracted thousands of primarily lower-income working people. UNIA members wore colorful uniforms and promoted the doctrine of a “negritude” that reversed the color hierarchy of white supremacy, prizing blackness and identifying light skin as a mark of inferiority. Intellectual leaders like Du Bois, whose lighter skin put him low on Garvey’s social order, considered the UNIA leader a charlatan. Garvey was eventually imprisoned for mail fraud and then deported, but his legacy set the stage for Malcolm X and the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

## PROHIBITION

At precisely the same time that African Americans and women were experimenting with new forms of social expression, the country as a whole was undergoing a process of austere and dramatic social reform in the form of alcohol prohibition. After decades of organizing to reduce or end the consumption of alcohol in the United States, temperance groups and the Anti-Saloon League finally succeeded in pushing through the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors ([\[link\]](#)). The law proved difficult to enforce, as illegal alcohol soon poured in from Canada and the Caribbean,



and rural Americans resorted to home-brewed “moonshine.” The result was an eroding of respect for law and order, as many people continued to drink illegal liquor. Rather than bringing about an age of sobriety, as Progressive reformers had hoped, it gave rise to a new subculture that included illegal importers, interstate smuggling (or **bootlegging**), clandestine saloons referred to as “speakeasies,” hipflasks, cocktail parties, and the organized crime of trafficking liquor.



(a)



(b)

While forces of law and order confiscated and discarded alcohol when they found it (a), consumers found ingenious ways of hiding liquor during prohibition, such as this cane that served as a flask (b).

Prohibition also revealed deep political divisions in the nation. The Democratic Party found itself deeply divided between urban, northern “wets” who hated the idea of abstinence, and rural, southern “dries” who favored the amendment. This divided the party and opened the door for the Republican Party to gain ascendancy in the 1920s. All politicians, including



Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Robert La Follette, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, equivocated in their support for the law. Publicly, they catered to the Anti-Saloon League; however, they failed to provide funding for enforcement.

Prohibition sparked a rise in organized crime. “Scarface” Al Capone ([link](#)) ran an extensive bootlegging and criminal operation known as the Chicago Outfit or Chicago mafia. By 1927, Capone’s organization included a number of illegal activities including bootlegging, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, and even murder. His operation was earning him more than \$100 million annually, and many local police were on his payroll. Although he did not have a monopoly on crime, his organizational structure was better than many other criminals of his era. His liquor trafficking business and his Chicago soup kitchens during the Great Depression led some Americans to liken Capone to a modern-day Robin Hood. Still, Capone was eventually imprisoned for eleven years for tax evasion, including a stint in California’s notorious Alcatraz prison.



Al Capone, pictured here in his U.S. Department of Justice mug shot, was convicted of tax fraud and sent to prison in 1931.

## THE LOST GENERATION

As the country struggled with the effects and side-effects of prohibition, many young intellectuals endeavored to come to grips with a lingering sense of disillusionment. World War I, fundamentalism, and the Red Scare—a pervasive American fear of Communist infiltrators prompted by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution—all left their mark on these intellectuals. Known as the **Lost Generation**, writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, and John Dos Passos expressed their hopelessness and despair by skewering the middle class in their work. They felt alienated from society, so they tried to escape (some literally) to criticize it. Many lived an **expatriate** life in Paris for the decade, although others went to Rome or Berlin.

The Lost Generation writer that best exemplifies the mood of the 1920s was F. Scott Fitzgerald, now considered one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. His debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, describes a generation of youth “grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faith in man shaken.” *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, exposed the doom that always follows the fun, fast-lived life. Fitzgerald depicted the modern millionaire Jay Gatsby living a profligate life: unscrupulous, coarse, and in love with another man’s wife. Both Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived this life as well, squandering the money he made from his writing.

### Note:

#### F. Scott Fitzgerald on the 1920s

In the 1920s, Fitzgerald was one of the most celebrated authors of his day, publishing *This Side of Paradise*, *The Beautiful and Damned*, and *The Great Gatsby* in quick succession. However, his profligate lifestyle with his wife Zelda sapped their funds, and Fitzgerald had to struggle to maintain their lavish lifestyle. Below is an excerpt from “The Crack-Up,” a personal essay by Fitzgerald originally published in *Esquire* in which he describes his “good life” during the 1920s.

"It seemed a romantic business to be a successful literary man—you were not ever going to be as famous as a movie star but what note you had was

probably longer-lived; you were never going to have the power of a man of strong political or religious convictions but you were certainly more independent. Of course within the practice of your trade you were forever unsatisfied—but I, for one, would not have chosen any other.

As the Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them, my two juvenile regrets—at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college, and at not getting overseas during the war—resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of imaginary heroism that were good enough to go to sleep on in restless nights. The big problems of life seemed to solve themselves, and if the business of fixing them was difficult, it made one too tired to think of more general problems.—F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Crack-Up,” 1936”

How does Fitzgerald describe his life in the 1920s? How did his interpretation reflect the reality of the decade?

Equally idiosyncratic and disillusioned was writer Ernest Hemingway ([link](#)). He lived a peripatetic and adventurous lifestyle in Europe, Cuba, and Africa, working as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I and traveling to Spain in the 1930s to cover the civil war there. His experiences of war and tragedy stuck with him, emerging in colorful scenes in his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). In 1952, his novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, won the Pulitzer Prize. Two years later, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for this book and his overall influence on contemporary style.



Ernest Hemingway was one of the most prominent members of the Lost Generation who went to live as expatriates in Europe during the 1920s.

**Note:**

Listen to an [audio](#) of Hemingway's Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

Not all Lost Generation writers were like Fitzgerald or Hemingway. The writing of Sinclair Lewis, rather than expressing a defined disillusionment, was more influenced by the Progressivism of the previous generation. In *Babbitt* (1922), he examined the “sheep following the herd” mentality that conformity promoted. He satirized American middle-class life as pleasure seeking and mindless. Similarly, writer Edith Wharton celebrated life in old New York, a vanished society, in *The Age of Innocence*, in 1920. Wharton came from a very wealthy, socialite family in New York, where she was educated by tutors and never attended college. She lived for many years in

Europe; during the Great War, she worked in Paris helping women establish businesses.

## Section Summary

Different groups reacted to the upheavals of the 1920s in different ways. Some people, especially young urbanites, embraced the new amusements and social venues of the decade. Women found new opportunities for professional and political advancement, as well as new models of sexual liberation; however, the women's rights movement began to wane with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. For black artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the decade was marked less by leisure and consumption than by creativity and purpose. African American leaders like Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois responded to the retrenched racism of the time with different campaigns for civil rights and black empowerment. Others, like the writers of the Lost Generation, reveled in exposing the hypocrisies and shallowness of mainstream middle-class culture. Meanwhile, the passage of prohibition served to increase the illegal production of alcohol and led to a rise in organized crime.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

The popularization of which psychologist's ideas encouraged the new morality of the 1920s?

- A. Sigmund Freud
- B. Alice Paul
- C. W. E. B. Du Bois
- D. Margaret Sanger

---

#### Solution:

A

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Which amendment did Alice Paul promote to end gender discrimination?

- A. Prohibition Amendment
  - B. Equal Rights Amendment
  - C. Sheppard-Towner Amendment
  - D. Free Exercise Amendment
- 

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Which novel of the era satirized the conformity of the American middle class?

- A. *This Side of Paradise*
  - B. *The Sun Also Rises*
  - C. *A Farewell to Arms*
  - D. *Babbitt*
- 

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Why did the prohibition amendment fail after its adoption in 1919?

---

**Solution:**

The prohibition amendment failed due to its infeasibility. It lacked both public support and funds for its enforcement. It also lessened Americans' respect for law and order, and sparked a rise in unlawful activities, such as illegal alcohol production and organized crime.

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What was the Harlem Renaissance, and who were some of the most famous participants?

---

**Solution:**

The Harlem Renaissance was a rediscovery and celebration of black culture and race pride. Within this context, black literature and art flourished. Writers such as Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston created fiction and poetry that spoke directly to the experiences of black Americans. Meanwhile, black scholars and political leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, created new social and political ideologies and defined a distinct national identity for African Americans.

**Glossary****bootlegging**

a nineteenth-century term for the illegal transport of alcoholic beverages that became popular during prohibition

**expatriate**

someone who lives outside of their home country

**flapper**

a young, modern woman who embraced the new morality and fashions of the Jazz Age

Lost Generation

a group of writers who came of age during World War I and expressed their disillusionment with the era

Negro nationalism

the notion that African Americans had a distinct and separate national heritage that should inspire pride and a sense of community

new morality

the more permissive mores adopted by many young people in the 1920s



## Chapter 24: The Depths of the Great Depression

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Identify the challenges that everyday Americans faced as a result of the Great Depression and analyze the government's initial unwillingness to provide assistance
- Explain the particular challenges that African Americans faced during the crisis
- Identify the unique challenges that farmers in the Great Plains faced during this period

From industrial strongholds to the rural Great Plains, from factory workers to farmers, the Great Depression affected millions. In cities, as industry slowed, then sometimes stopped altogether, workers lost jobs and joined breadlines, or sought out other charitable efforts. With limited government relief efforts, private charities tried to help, but they were unable to match the pace of demand. In rural areas, farmers suffered still more. In some parts of the country, prices for crops dropped so precipitously that farmers could not earn enough to pay their mortgages, losing their farms to foreclosure. In the Great Plains, one of the worst droughts in history left the land barren and unfit for growing even minimal food to live on.

The country's most vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and those subject to discrimination, like African Americans, were the hardest hit. Most white Americans felt entitled to what few jobs were available, leaving African Americans unable to find work, even in the jobs once considered their domain. In all, the economic misery was unprecedented in the country's history.

### **STARVING TO DEATH**

By the end of 1932, the Great Depression had affected some sixty million people, most of whom wealthier Americans perceived as the “deserving poor.” Yet, at the time, federal efforts to help those in need were extremely limited, and national charities had neither the capacity nor the will to elicit the large-scale response required to address the problem. The American Red Cross did exist, but Chairman John Barton Payne contended that

unemployment was not an “Act of God” but rather an “Act of Man,” and therefore refused to get involved in widespread direct relief efforts. Clubs like the Elks tried to provide food, as did small groups of individually organized college students. Religious organizations remained on the front lines, offering food and shelter. In larger cities, breadlines and soup lines became a common sight. At one count in 1932, there were as many as eighty-two breadlines in New York City.

Despite these efforts, however, people were destitute and ultimately starving. Families would first run through any savings, if they were lucky enough to have any. Then, the few who had insurance would cash out their policies. Cash surrender payments of individual insurance policies tripled in the first three years of the Great Depression, with insurance companies issuing total payments in excess of \$1.2 billion in 1932 alone. When those funds were depleted, people would borrow from family and friends, and when they could get no more, they would simply stop paying rent or mortgage payments. When evicted, they would move in with relatives, whose own situation was likely only a step or two behind. The added burden of additional people would speed along that family’s demise, and the cycle would continue. This situation spiraled downward, and did so quickly. Even as late as 1939, over 60 percent of rural households, and 82 percent of farm families, were classified as “impoverished.” In larger urban areas, unemployment levels exceeded the national average, with over half a million unemployed workers in Chicago, and nearly a million in New York City. Breadlines and soup kitchens were packed, serving as many as eighty-five thousand meals daily in New York City alone. Over fifty thousand New York citizens were homeless by the end of 1932.

Children, in particular, felt the brunt of poverty. Many in coastal cities would roam the docks in search of spoiled vegetables to bring home. Elsewhere, children begged at the doors of more well-off neighbors, hoping for stale bread, table scraps, or raw potato peelings. Said one childhood survivor of the Great Depression, “You get used to hunger. After the first few days it doesn’t even hurt; you just get weak.” In 1931 alone, there were at least twenty documented cases of starvation; in 1934, that number grew to 110. In rural areas where such documentation was lacking, the number

was likely far higher. And while the middle class did not suffer from starvation, they experienced hunger as well.

By the time Hoover left office in 1933, the poor survived not on relief efforts, but because they had learned to be poor. A family with little food would stay in bed to save fuel and avoid burning calories. People began eating parts of animals that had normally been considered waste. They scavenged for scrap wood to burn in the furnace, and when electricity was turned off, it was not uncommon to try and tap into a neighbor's wire. Family members swapped clothes; sisters might take turns going to church in the one dress they owned. As one girl in a mountain town told her teacher, who had said to go home and get food, "I can't. It's my sister's turn to eat."

**Note:**

For his book on the Great Depression, *Hard Times*, author Studs Terkel interviewed hundreds of Americans from across the country. He subsequently selected over seventy interviews to air on a radio show that was based in Chicago. Visit [Studs Terkel: Conversations with America](#) to listen to those interviews, during which participants reflect on their personal hardships as well as on national events during the Great Depression.

## **BLACK AND POOR: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

Most African Americans did not participate in the land boom and stock market speculation that preceded the crash, but that did not stop the effects of the Great Depression from hitting them particularly hard. Subject to continuing racial discrimination, blacks nationwide fared even worse than their hard-hit white counterparts. As the prices for cotton and other agricultural products plummeted, farm owners paid workers less or simply laid them off. Landlords evicted sharecroppers, and even those who owned

their land outright had to abandon it when there was no way to earn any income.

In cities, African Americans fared no better. Unemployment was rampant, and many whites felt that any available jobs belonged to whites first. In some Northern cities, whites would conspire to have African American workers fired to allow white workers access to their jobs. Even jobs traditionally held by black workers, such as household servants or janitors, were now going to whites. By 1932, approximately one-half of all black Americans were unemployed. Racial violence also began to rise. In the South, lynching became more common again, with twenty-eight documented lynchings in 1933, compared to eight in 1932. Since communities were preoccupied with their own hardships, and organizing civil rights efforts was a long, difficult process, many resigned themselves to, or even ignored, this culture of racism and violence. Occasionally, however, an incident was notorious enough to gain national attention.

One such incident was the case of the **Scottsboro Boys** ([\[link\]](#)). In 1931, nine black boys, who had been riding the rails, were arrested for vagrancy and disorderly conduct after an altercation with some white travelers on the train. Two young white women, who had been dressed as boys and traveling with a group of white boys, came forward and said that the black boys had raped them. The case, which was tried in Scottsboro, Alabama, illuminated decades of racial hatred and illustrated the injustice of the court system. Despite significant evidence that the women had not been raped at all, along with one of the women subsequently recanting her testimony, the all-white jury quickly convicted the boys and sentenced all but one of them to death. The verdict broke through the veil of indifference toward the plight of African Americans, and protests erupted among newspaper editors, academics, and social reformers in the North. The Communist Party of the United States offered to handle the case and sought retrial; the NAACP later joined in this effort. In all, the case was tried three separate times. The series of trials and retrials, appeals, and overturned convictions shone a spotlight on a system that provided poor legal counsel and relied on all-white juries. In October 1932, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with the Communist Party's defense attorneys that the defendants had been denied adequate legal representation at the original trial, and that due process as

provided by the Fourteenth Amendment had been denied as a result of the exclusion of any potential black jurors. Eventually, most of the accused received lengthy prison terms and subsequent parole, but avoided the death penalty. The Scottsboro case ultimately laid some of the early groundwork for the modern American civil rights movement. Alabama granted posthumous pardons to all defendants in 2013.

### The Scottsboro Boys



Left to right: Clarence Norris, Charlie Weems, Haywood Patterson, Ozie Powell, Willie Roberson, Eugene Williams, Olen Montgomery, Andy Wright, Roy Wright

The trial and conviction of nine African American boys in Scottsboro, Alabama, illustrated the numerous injustices of the American court system. Despite being falsely accused, the boys received lengthy prison terms and were not officially pardoned by the State of Alabama until 2013.

#### **Note:**

Read [Voices from Scottsboro](#) for the perspectives of both participants and spectators in the Scottsboro case, from the initial trial to the moment, in 1976, when one of the women sued for slander.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE MEETS ECONOMIC HARDSHIP: THE DUST BOWL**

Despite the widely held belief that rural Americans suffered less in the Great Depression due to their ability to at least grow their own food, this was not the case. Farmers, ranchers, and their families suffered more than any group other than African Americans during the Depression.

From the turn of the century through much of World War I, farmers in the Great Plains experienced prosperity due to unusually good growing conditions, high commodity prices, and generous government farming policies that led to a rush for land. As the federal government continued to purchase all excess produce for the war effort, farmers and ranchers fell into several bad practices, including mortgaging their farms and borrowing money against future production in order to expand. However, after the war, prosperity rapidly dwindled, particularly during the recession of 1921. Seeking to recoup their losses through economies of scale in which they would expand their production even further to take full advantage of their available land and machinery, farmers plowed under native grasses to plant acre after acre of wheat, with little regard for the long-term repercussions to the soil. Regardless of these misguided efforts, commodity prices continued to drop, finally plummeting in 1929, when the price of wheat dropped from two dollars to forty cents per bushel.

Exacerbating the problem was a massive drought that began in 1931 and lasted for eight terrible years. Dust storms roiled through the Great Plains, creating huge, choking clouds that piled up in doorways and filtered into homes through closed windows. Even more quickly than it had boomed, the land of agricultural opportunity went bust, due to widespread overproduction and overuse of the land, as well as to the harsh weather conditions that followed, resulting in the creation of the **Dust Bowl** ([\[link\]](#)).



The dust storms that blew through the Great Plains were epic in scale. Drifts of dirt piled up against doors and windows. People wore goggles and tied rags over their mouths to keep the dust out. (credit: U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

Livestock died, or had to be sold, as there was no money for feed. Crops intended to feed the family withered and died in the drought. Terrifying dust storms became more and more frequent, as “black blizzards” of dirt blew across the landscape and created a new illness known as “dust pneumonia.” In 1935 alone, over 850 million tons of topsoil blew away. To put this number in perspective, geologists estimate that it takes the earth five hundred years to naturally regenerate one inch of topsoil; yet, just one significant dust storm could destroy a similar amount. In their desperation to get more from the land, farmers had stripped it of the delicate balance that kept it healthy. Unaware of the consequences, they had moved away from such traditional practices as crop rotation and allowing land to regain its strength by permitting it to lie fallow between plantings, working the land to death.



For farmers, the results were catastrophic. Unlike most factory workers in the cities, in most cases, farmers lost their homes when they lost their livelihood. Most farms and ranches were originally mortgaged to small country banks that understood the dynamics of farming, but as these banks failed, they often sold rural mortgages to larger eastern banks that were less concerned with the specifics of farm life. With the effects of the drought and low commodity prices, farmers could not pay their local banks, which in turn lacked funds to pay the large urban banks. Ultimately, the large banks foreclosed on the farms, often swallowing up the small country banks in the process. It is worth noting that of the five thousand banks that closed between 1930 and 1932, over 75 percent were country banks in locations with populations under 2,500. Given this dynamic, it is easy to see why farmers in the Great Plains remained wary of big city bankers.

For farmers who survived the initial crash, the situation worsened, particularly in the Great Plains where years of overproduction and rapidly declining commodity prices took their toll. Prices continued to decline, and as farmers tried to stay afloat, they produced still more crops, which drove prices even lower. Farms failed at an astounding rate, and farmers sold out at rock-bottom prices. One farm in Shelby, Nebraska was mortgaged at \$4,100 and sold for \$49.50. One-fourth of the entire state of Mississippi was auctioned off *in a single day* at a foreclosure auction in April 1932.

Not all farmers tried to keep their land. Many, especially those who had arrived only recently, in an attempt to capitalize on the earlier prosperity, simply walked away ([\[link\]](#)). In hard-hit Oklahoma, thousands of farmers packed up what they could and walked or drove away from the land they thought would be their future. They, along with other displaced farmers from throughout the Great Plains, became known as Okies. Okies were an emblem of the failure of the American breadbasket to deliver on its promise, and their story was made famous in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.





As the Dust Bowl continued in the Great Plains, many had to abandon their land and equipment, as captured in this image from 1936, taken in Dallas, South Dakota.  
(credit: United States Department of Agriculture)

**Note:**

Experience the [Interactive Dust Bowl](#) to see how decisions compounded to create peoples' destiny. Click through to see what choices you would make and where that would take you.

**Note:**

Caroline Henderson on the Dust Bowl

"Now we are facing a fourth year of failure. There can be no wheat for us in 1935 in spite of all our careful and expensive work in preparing ground, sowing and re-sowing our allocated acreage. Native grass pastures are

permanently damaged, in many cases hopelessly ruined, smothered under by drifted sand. Fences are buried under banks of thistles and hard packed earth or undermined by the eroding action of the wind and lying flat on the ground. Less traveled roads are impassable, covered deep under by sand or the finer silt-like loam. Orchards, groves and hedge-rows cultivated for many years with patient care are dead or dying . . . Impossible it seems not to grieve that the work of hands should prove so perishable. —Caroline Henderson, Shelton, Oklahoma, 1935"

Much like other farm families whose livelihoods were destroyed by the Dust Bowl, Caroline Henderson describes a level of hardship that many Americans living in Depression-ravaged cities could never understand. Despite their hard work, millions of Americans were losing both their produce and their homes, sometimes in as little as forty-eight hours, to environmental catastrophes. Lacking any other explanation, many began to question what they had done to incur God's wrath. Note in particular Henderson's references to "dead," "dying," and "perishable," and contrast those terms with her depiction of the "careful and expensive work" undertaken by their own hands. Many simply could not understand how such a catastrophe could have occurred.

## CHANGING VALUES, CHANGING CULTURE

In the decades before the Great Depression, and particularly in the 1920s, American culture largely reflected the values of individualism, self-reliance, and material success through competition. Novels like F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* portrayed wealth and the self-made man in America, albeit in a critical fashion. In film, many silent movies, such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*, depicted the rags-to-riches fable that Americans so loved. With the shift in U.S. fortunes, however, came a shift in values, and with it, a new cultural reflection. The arts revealed a new emphasis on the welfare of the whole and the importance of community in preserving family life. While box office sales briefly declined at the beginning of the Depression, they quickly rebounded. Movies offered a way for Americans to think of better times, and people

were willing to pay twenty-five cents for a chance to escape, at least for a few hours.

Even more than escapism, other films at the close of the decade reflected on the sense of community and family values that Americans struggled to maintain throughout the entire Depression. John Ford's screen version of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* came out in 1940, portraying the haunting story of the Joad family's exodus from their Oklahoma farm to California in search of a better life. Their journey leads them to realize that they need to join a larger social movement—communism—dedicated to bettering the lives of all people. Tom Joad says, "Well, maybe it's like Casy says, a fella ain't got a soul of his own, but on'y a piece of a soul—the one big soul that belongs to ever'body." The greater lesson learned was one of the strength of community in the face of individual adversity.

Another trope was that of the hard-working everyman against greedy banks and corporations. This was perhaps best portrayed in the movies of Frank Capra, whose *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was emblematic of his work. In this 1939 film, Jimmy Stewart plays a legislator sent to Washington to finish out the term of a deceased senator. While there, he fights corruption to ensure the construction of a boy's camp in his hometown rather than a dam project that would only serve to line the pockets of a few. He ultimately engages in a two-day filibuster, standing up to the power players to do what's right. The Depression era was a favorite of Capra's to depict in his films, including *It's a Wonderful Life*, released in 1946. In this film, Jimmy Stewart runs a family-owned savings and loan, which at one point faces a bank run similar to those seen in 1929–1930. In the end, community support helps Stewart retain his business and home against the unscrupulous actions of a wealthy banker who sought to bring ruin to his family.

**Note:**

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

"They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob  
When there was earth to plow or guns to bear, I was always there, right on  
the job

They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and glory ahead  
Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?  
Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time  
Once I built a railroad, now it's done, Brother, can you spare a dime?  
Once I built a tower up to the sun, brick and rivet and lime  
Once I built a tower, now it's done, Brother, can you spare a dime?  
—Jay Gorney and “Yip” Harburg

“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” first appeared in 1932, written for the Broadway musical *New Americana* by Jay Gorney, a composer who based the song’s music on a Russian lullaby, and Edgar Yipsel “Yip” Harburg, a lyricist who would go on to win an Academy Award for the song “Over the Rainbow” from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

With its lyrics speaking to the plight of the common man during the Great Depression and the refrain appealing to the same sense of community later found in the films of Frank Capra, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” quickly became the *de facto* anthem of the Great Depression. Recordings by Bing Crosby, Al Jolson, and Rudy Vallee all enjoyed tremendous popularity in the 1930s.

**Note:**

For more on “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” and the Great Depression, visit [ArtsEdge](#) to explore the Kennedy Center’s digital resources and learn the “Story Behind the Song.”

Finally, there was a great deal of pure escapism in the popular culture of the Depression. Even the songs found in films reminded many viewers of the bygone days of prosperity and happiness, from Al Dubin and Henry Warren’s hit “We’re in the Money” to the popular “Happy Days are Here Again.” The latter eventually became the theme song of Franklin Roosevelt’s 1932 presidential campaign. People wanted to forget their worries and enjoy the madcap antics of the Marx Brothers, the youthful charm of Shirley Temple, the dazzling dances of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers ([\[link\]](#)), or the comforting morals of the *Andy Hardy* series. The

Hardy series—nine films in all, produced by MGM from 1936 to 1940—starred Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, and all followed the adventures of a small-town judge and his son. No matter what the challenge, it was never so big that it could not be solved with a musical production put on by the neighborhood kids, bringing together friends and family members in a warm display of community values.



*Flying Down to Rio* (1933) was the first motion picture to feature the immensely popular dance duo of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The pair would go on to star in nine more Hollywood musicals throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

All of these movies reinforced traditional American values, which suffered during these hard times, in part due to declining marriage and birth rates, and increased domestic violence. At the same time, however, they reflected an increased interest in sex and sexuality. While the birth rate was dropping, surveys in *Fortune* magazine in 1936–1937 found that two-thirds of college students favored birth control, and that 50 percent of men and 25 percent of women admitted to premarital sex, continuing a trend among younger Americans that had begun to emerge in the 1920s. Contraceptive sales soared during the decade, and again, culture reflected this shift. Blonde bombshell Mae West was famous for her sexual innuendoes, and her flirtatious persona was hugely popular, although it got her banned on radio broadcasts throughout the Midwest. Whether West or Garland, Chaplin or Stewart, American film continued to be a barometer of American values, and their challenges, through the decade.

## Section Summary

The Great Depression affected huge segments of the American population—sixty million people by one estimate. But certain groups were hit harder than the rest. African Americans faced discrimination in finding employment, as white workers sought even low-wage jobs like housecleaning. Southern blacks moved away from their farms as crop prices failed, migrating en masse to Northern cities, which had little to offer them. Rural Americans were also badly hit. The eight-year drought that began shortly after the stock market crash exacerbated farmers' and ranchers' problems. The cultivation of greater amounts of acreage in the preceding decades meant that land was badly overworked, and the drought led to massive and terrible dust storms, creating the region's nickname, the Dust Bowl. Some farmers tried to remain and buy up more land as neighbors went broke; others simply fled their failed farms and moved away, often to the large-scale migrant farms found in California, to search for a better life that few ever found. Maltreated by Californians who wished to avoid the unwanted competition for jobs that these "Okies" represented, many of the Dust Bowl farmers were left wandering as a result.

There was very little in the way of public assistance to help the poor. While private charities did what they could, the scale of the problem was too large

for them to have any lasting effects. People learned to survive as best they could by sending their children out to beg, sharing clothing, and scrounging wood to feed the furnace. Those who could afford it turned to motion pictures for escape. Movies and books during the Great Depression reflected the shift in American cultural norms, away from rugged individualism toward a more community-based lifestyle.

## Review Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following hardships did African Americans *not* typically face during the Great Depression?

- A. lower farm wages in the South
- B. the belief that white workers needed jobs more than their black counterparts
- C. white workers taking historically “black” jobs, such as maids and janitors
- D. widespread race riots in large urban centers

---

#### Solution:

D

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

Which of the following was *not* a key factor in the conditions that led to the Dust Bowl?

- A. previous overcultivation of farmland
- B. decreasing American demand for farm produce
- C. unfavorable weather conditions

D. poor farming techniques regarding proper irrigation and acreage rotation

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

What did the popular movies of the Depression reveal about American values at that time? How did these values contrast with the values Americans held before the Depression?

---

**Solution:**

American films in the 1930s served to both assuage the fears and frustrations of many Americans suffering through the Depression and reinforce the idea that communal efforts—town and friends working together—would help to address the hardships. Previous emphasis upon competition and individualism slowly gave way to notions of “neighbor helping neighbor” and seeking group solutions to common problems. The *Andy Hardy* series, in particular, combined entertainment with the concept of family coming together to solve shared problems. The themes of greed, competition, and capitalist-driven market decisions no longer commanded a large audience among American moviegoers.

## **Glossary**

### **Dust Bowl**

the area in the middle of the country that had been badly overfarmed in the 1920s and suffered from a terrible drought that coincided with the Great Depression; the name came from the “black blizzard” of topsoil and dust that blew through the area



## Scottsboro Boys

a reference to the infamous trial in Scottsboro, Alabama in 1931, where nine African American boys were falsely accused of raping two white women and sentenced to death; the extreme injustice of the trial, particularly given the age of the boys and the inadequacy of the testimony against them, garnered national and international attention

## Chapter 25: The Second New Deal

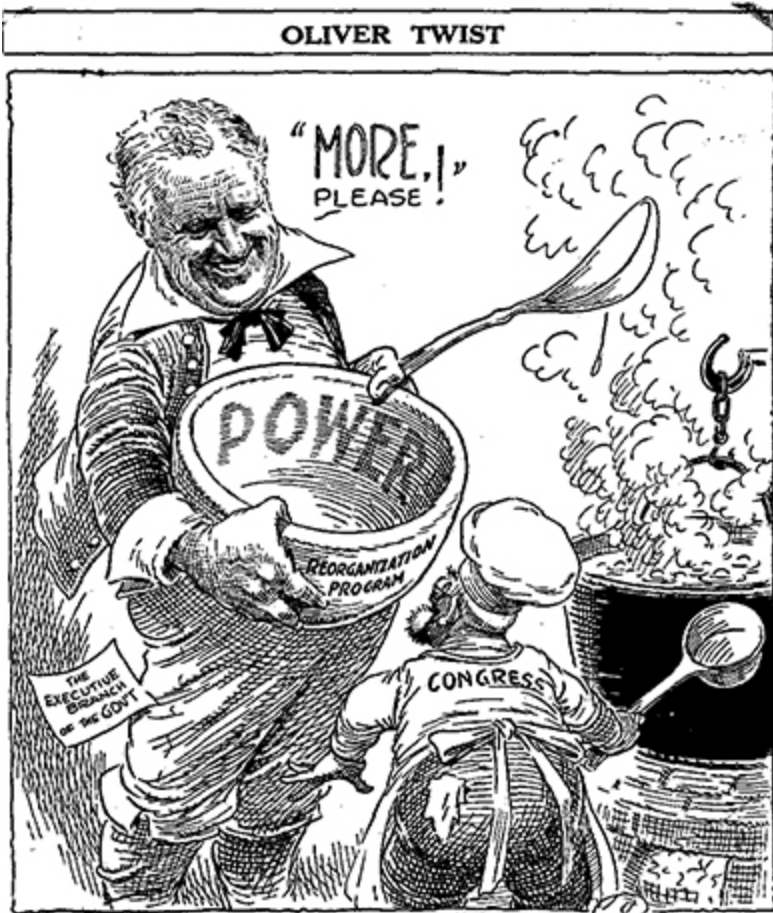
By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify key pieces of legislation from the Second New Deal
- Assess the entire New Deal, especially in terms of its impact on women, African Americans, and Native Americans

Roosevelt won his second term in a landslide, but that did not mean he was immune to criticism. His critics came from both the left and the right, with conservatives deeply concerned over his expansion of government spending and power, and liberals angered that he had not done more to help those still struggling. Adding to Roosevelt's challenges, the Supreme Court struck down several key elements of the First New Deal, angering Roosevelt and spurring him to try and stack the courts in his second term. Still, he entered his new term with the unequivocal support of the voting public, and he wasted no time beginning the second phase of his economic plan. While the First New Deal focused largely on stemming the immediate suffering of the American people, the Second New Deal put in place legislation that changed America's social safety net for good.

### **CHALLENGES FROM CRITICS ON ALL SIDES**

While many people supported Roosevelt, especially in the first few years of his presidency, the New Deal did receive significant criticism, both from conservatives who felt that it was a radical agenda to ruin the country's model of free enterprise, and from liberals who felt that it did not provide enough help to those who needed it most ([\[link\]](#)).



Roosevelt used previously unheard of levels of government power in his attempt to push the country out of the Great Depression, as artist Joseph Parrish depicts here in this 1937 *Chicago Tribune* cartoon. While critics on the left felt that he had not done enough, critics on the right felt that his use of power was frighteningly close to fascism and socialism.

Industrialists and wealthy Americans led the conservative criticism against the president. Whether attacking his character or simply stating that he was moving away from American values toward fascism and socialism, they sought to undermine his power and popularity. Most notably, the American

Liberty League—comprised largely of conservative Democrats who lamented the excesses of several of Roosevelt's New Deal programs—labeled the AAA as fascist and proclaimed later New Deal programs to be key threats to the very nature of democracy. Additional criticism came from the National Association of Manufacturers, which urged businessmen to outright ignore portions of the NRA that promoted collective bargaining, as well as subsequent labor protection legislation. In 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt the most crushing blow to Roosevelt's vision, striking down several key pieces of the New Deal as unconstitutional. They found that both the AAA and the NIRA overreached federal authority. The negation of some of his most ambitious economic recovery efforts frustrated Roosevelt greatly, but he was powerless to stop it at this juncture.

Meanwhile, others felt that Roosevelt had not done enough. Dr. Francis E. Townsend of California was one who felt that Roosevelt had failed to adequately address the country's tremendous problems. Townsend, who was a retired dentist, proposed an expansive pension plan for the elderly. The Townsend Plan, as it was known, gained a great deal of popularity: It recommended paying every citizen over sixty who retired from work the sum of \$200 per month, provided they spend it in thirty days. Another figure who gained national attention was Father Charles Coughlin. He was a "radio priest" from Michigan who, although he initially supported the New Deal, subsequently argued that Roosevelt stopped far too short in his defense of labor, monetary reform, and the nationalization of key industries. The president's plan, he proclaimed, was inadequate. He created the National Union for Social Justice and used his weekly radio show to gain followers.

A more direct political threat to Roosevelt came from muckraker Upton Sinclair, who pursued the California governorship in 1934 through a campaign based upon criticism of the New Deal's shortcomings. In his "End Poverty in California" program, Sinclair called for a progressive income tax, a pension program for the elderly, and state seizure of factories and farms where property taxes remained unpaid. The state would then offer jobs to the unemployed to work those farms and factories in a cooperative mode. Although Sinclair lost the election to his Republican opponent, he did draw local and national attention to several of his ideas.

The biggest threat to the president, however, came from corrupt but beloved Louisiana senator Huey “Kingfish” Long ([link](#)). His disapproval of Roosevelt came in part from his own ambitions for higher office; Long stated that the president was not doing enough to help people and proposed his own Share Our Wealth program. Under this plan, Long recommended the liquidation of all large personal fortunes in order to fund direct payments to less fortunate Americans. He foresaw giving \$5,000 to every family, \$2,500 to every worker, as well as a series of elderly pensions and education funds. Despite his questionable math, which numerous economists quickly pointed out rendered his program unworkable, by 1935, Long had a significant following of over four million people. If he had not been assassinated by the son-in-law of a local political rival, he may well have been a contender against Roosevelt for the 1936 presidential nomination.



Huey P. Long was a charismatic populist and governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932. In 1932, he became a member of the U.S. Senate and would have been a serious

rival for Roosevelt in the  
1936 presidential election  
if his life had not been cut  
short by an assassin's  
bullet.

## ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE

Roosevelt recognized that some of the criticisms of the New Deal were valid. Although he was still reeling from the Supreme Court's invalidation of key statutes, he decided to face his re-election bid in 1936 by unveiling another wave of legislation that he dubbed the Second New Deal. In the first week of June 1935, Roosevelt called congressional leaders into the White House and gave them a list of "must-pass" legislation that he wanted before they adjourned for the summer. Whereas the policies of the first hundred days may have shored up public confidence and stopped the most drastic of the problems, the second hundred days changed the face of America for the next sixty years.

The Banking Act of 1935 was the most far-reaching revision of banking laws since the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1914. Previously, regional reserve banks, particularly the New York Reserve Bank—controlled by the powerful Morgan and Rockefeller families—had dominated policy-making at the Federal Reserve. Under the new system, there would be a seven-member board of governors to oversee regional banks. They would have control over reserve requirements, discount rates, board member selection, and more. Not surprisingly, this new board kept initial interest rates quite low, allowing the federal government to borrow billions of dollars of additional cash to fund major relief and recovery programs.

In 1935, Congress also passed the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which authorized the single largest expenditure at that time in the country's history: \$4.8 billion. Almost one-third of those funds were invested in a new relief agency, the **Works Progress Administration** (WPA). Harry

Hopkins, formerly head of the CWA, took on the WPA and ran it until 1943. In that time, the program provided employment relief to over eight million Americans, or approximately 20 percent of the country's workforce. The WPA funded the construction of more than 2,500 hospitals, 5,900 schools, 570,000 miles of road, and more. The WPA also created the Federal One Project, which employed approximately forty thousand artists in theater, art, music, and writing. They produced state murals, guidebooks, concerts, and drama performances all around the country ([\[link\]](#)). Additionally, the project funded the collection of oral histories, including those of former slaves, which provided a valuable addition to the nation's understanding of slave life. Finally, the WPA also included the National Youth Administration (NYA), which provided work-study jobs to over 500,000 college students and four million high school students.



Painted by artists funded by the Federal One Project, this section of *Ohio*, a mural located in the Bellevue, Ohio post office, illustrates a busy industrial scene. Artists painted the communities where they lived, thus creating visions

of farms, factories, urban life, harvest celebrations, and more that still reflect the life and work of that era. (credit: Works Progress Administration)

**Note:**

Browse the *Born in Slavery* [collection](#) to examine personal accounts of former slaves, recorded between 1936 and 1938, as part of the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA.

With the implementation of the Second New Deal, Roosevelt also created the country's present-day social safety net. The **Social Security Act** established programs intended to help the most vulnerable: the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled, and the young. It included a pension fund for all retired people—except domestic workers and farmers, which therefore left many women and African Americans beyond the scope of its benefits—over the age of sixty-five, to be paid through a payroll tax on both employee and employer. Related to this act, Congress also passed a law on unemployment insurance, to be funded by a tax on employers, and programs for unwed mothers, as well as for those who were blind, deaf, or disabled. It is worth noting that some elements of these reforms were pulled from Roosevelt detractors Coughlin and Townsend; the popularity of their movements gave the president more leverage to push forward this type of legislation.

To the benefit of industrial workers, Roosevelt signed into law the Wagner Act, also known as the National Labor Relations Act. The protections previously afforded to workers under the NIRA were inadvertently lost when the Supreme Court struck down the original law due to larger regulatory concerns, leaving workers vulnerable. Roosevelt sought to



salvage this important piece of labor legislation, doing so with the Wagner Act. The act created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to once again protect American workers’ right to unionize and bargain collectively, as well as to provide a federal vehicle for labor grievances to be heard. Although roundly criticized by the Republican Party and factory owners, the Wagner Act withstood several challenges and eventually received constitutional sanction by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1937. The law received the strong support of John L. Lewis and the Congress of Industrial Organizations who had long sought government protection of industrial unionism, from the time they split from the American Federation of Labor in 1935 over disputes on whether to organize workers along craft or industrial lines. Following passage of the law, Lewis began a widespread publicity campaign urging industrial workers to join “the president’s union.” The relationship was mutually beneficial to Roosevelt, who subsequently received the endorsement of Lewis’s United Mine Workers union in the 1936 presidential election, along with a sizeable \$500,000 campaign contribution. The Wagner Act permanently established government-secured workers’ rights and protections from their employers, and it marked the beginning of labor’s political support for the Democratic Party.

The various programs that made up the Second New Deal are listed in the table below ([link](#)).

New Deal Legislation	Years Enacted	Brief Description
Fair Labor Standards Act	1938–today	Established minimum wage and forty-hour workweek

<b>New Deal Legislation</b>	<b>Years Enacted</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Farm Security Administration	1935–today	Provides poor farmers with education and economic support programs
Federal Crop Insurance Corporation	1938–today	Insures crops and livestock against loss of revenue
National Labor Relations Act	1935–today	Recognized right of workers to unionize & collectively bargain
National Youth Administration	1935–1939 (part of WPA)	Part-time employment for college and high school students
Rural Electrification Administration	1935–today	Provides public utilities to rural areas
Social Security Act	1935–today	Aid to retirees, unemployed, disabled
Surplus Commodities Program	1936–today	Provides food to the poor (still exists in Food Stamps program)
Works Progress Administration	1935–1943	Jobs program (including artists and youth)

Key Programs from the Second New Deal

## THE FINAL PIECES

Roosevelt entered the 1936 presidential election on a wave of popularity, and he beat Republican opponent Alf Landon by a nearly unanimous Electoral College vote of 523 to 8. Believing it to be his moment of strongest public support, Roosevelt chose to exact a measure of revenge against the U.S. Supreme Court for challenging his programs and to pressure them against challenging his more recent Second New Deal provisions. To this end, Roosevelt created the informally named “**Supreme Court Packing Plan**” and tried to pack the court in his favor by expanding the number of justices and adding new ones who supported his views. His plan was to add one justice for every current justice over the age of seventy who refused to step down. This would have allowed him to add six more justices, expanding the bench from nine to fifteen. Opposition was quick and thorough from both the Supreme Court and Congress, as well as from his own party. The subsequent retirement of Justice Van Devanter from the court, as well as the sudden death of Senator Joe T. Robinson, who championed Roosevelt’s plan before the Senate, all but signaled Roosevelt’s defeat. However, although he never received the support to make these changes, Roosevelt appeared to succeed in politically intimidating the current justices into supporting his newer programs, and they upheld both the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act. Never again during his presidency would the Supreme Court strike down any significant elements of his New Deal.

Roosevelt was not as successful in addressing the nation’s growing deficit. When he entered the presidency in 1933, Roosevelt did so with traditionally held fiscal beliefs, including the importance of a balanced budget in order to maintain public confidence in federal government operations. However, the severe economic conditions of the depression quickly convinced the president of the importance of government spending to create jobs and relief for the American people. As he commented to a crowd in Pittsburgh in 1936, “To balance our budget in 1933 or 1934 or 1935 would have been a crime against the American people. To do so . . . we should have had to set our face against human suffering with callous indifference. When Americans suffered, we refused to pass by on the other side. Humanity came first.” However, after his successful re-election, Roosevelt anticipated that the economy would recover enough by late 1936 that he could curtail spending by 1937. This reduction in spending, he hoped, would curb the

deficit. As the early months of 1937 unfolded, Roosevelt's hopes seemed supported by the most recent economic snapshot of the country. Production, wages, and profits had all returned to pre-1929 levels, while unemployment was at its lowest rate in the decade, down from 25 percent to 14 percent. But no sooner did Roosevelt cut spending when a recession hit. Two million Americans were newly out of work as unemployment quickly rose by 5 percent and industrial production declined by a third. Breadlines began to build again, while banks prepared to close.

Historians continue to debate the causes of this recession within a depression. Some believe the fear of increased taxes forced factory owners to curtail planned expansion; others blame the Federal Reserve for tightening the nation's money supply. Roosevelt, however, blamed the downturn on his decision to significantly curtail federal government spending in job relief programs such as the WPA. Several of his closest advisors, including Harry Hopkins, Henry Wallace, and others, urged him to adopt the new economic theory espoused by British economic John Maynard Keynes, who argued that deficit spending was necessary in advanced capitalist economies in order to maintain employment and stimulate consumer spending. Convinced of the necessity of such an approach, Roosevelt asked Congress in the spring of 1938 for additional emergency relief spending. Congress immediately authorized \$33 billion for PWA and WPA work projects. Although World War II would provide the final impetus for lasting economic recovery, Roosevelt's willingness to adapt in 1938 avoided another disaster.

Roosevelt signed the last substantial piece of New Deal legislation in the summer of 1938. The Fair Labor Standards Act established a federal minimum wage—at the time, forty cents per hour—a maximum workweek of forty hours (with an opportunity for four additional hours of work at overtime wages), and prohibited child labor for those under age sixteen. Roosevelt was unaware that the war would soon dominate his legacy, but this proved to be his last major piece of economic legislation in a presidency that changed the fabric of the country forever.

## **IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS**

The legacy of the New Deal is in part seen in the vast increase in national power: The federal government accepted responsibility for the nation's economic stability and prosperity. In retrospect, the majority of historians and economists judge it to have been a tremendous success. The New Deal not only established minimum standards for wages, working conditions, and overall welfare, it also allowed millions of Americans to hold onto their homes, farms, and savings. It laid the groundwork for an agenda of expanded federal government influence over the economy that continued through President Harry Truman's "Fair Deal" in the 1950s and President Lyndon Johnson's call for a "Great Society" in the 1960s. The New Deal state that embraced its responsibility for the citizens' welfare and proved willing to use its power and resources to spread the nation's prosperity lasted well into the 1980s, and many of its tenets persist today. Many would also agree that the postwar economic stability of the 1950s found its roots in the stabilizing influences introduced by social security, the job stability that union contracts provided, and federal housing mortgage programs introduced in the New Deal. The environment of the American West in particular, benefited from New Deal projects such as the Soil Conservation program.

Still, Roosevelt's programs also had their critics. Following the conservative rise initiated by presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964, and most often associated with the Ronald Reagan era of the 1980s, critics of the welfare state pointed to Roosevelt's presidency as the start of a slippery slope towards entitlement and the destruction of the individualist spirit upon which the United States had presumably developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the growth of the GDP between 1934 and 1940 approached an average of 7.5 percent—higher than in any other peacetime period in U.S. history, critics of the New Deal point out that unemployment still hovered around 15 percent in 1940. While the New Deal resulted in some environmental improvements, it also inaugurated a number of massive infrastructural projects, such as the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River, that came with grave environmental consequences. And other shortcomings of the New Deal were obvious and deliberate at the time.

## **African Americans under the New Deal**

Critics point out that not all Americans benefited from the New Deal. African Americans in particular were left out, with overt discrimination in hiring practices within the federal job programs, such as the CCC, CWA, and WPA. The NRA was oftentimes criticized as the “Negro Run Around” or “Negroes Ruined Again” program. As well, the AAA left tenant farmers and sharecroppers, many of whom were black, with no support. Even Social Security originally excluded domestic workers, a primary source of employment for African American women. Facing such criticism early in his administration, Roosevelt undertook some efforts to ensure a measure of equality in hiring practices for the relief agencies, and opportunities began to present themselves by 1935. The WPA eventually employed 350,000 African Americans annually, accounting for nearly 15 percent of its workforce. By the close of the CCC in 1938, this program had employed over 300,000 African Americans, increasing the black percentage of its workforce from 3 percent at the outset to nearly 11 percent at its close. Likewise, in 1934, the PWA began to require that all government projects under its purview hire African Americans using a quota that reflected their percentage of the local population being served. Additionally, among several important WPA projects, the Federal One Project included a literacy program that eventually reached over one million African American children, helping them learn how to read and write.

On the issue of race relations themselves, Roosevelt has a mixed legacy. Within his White House, Roosevelt had a number of African American appointees, although most were in minor positions. Unofficially, Roosevelt relied upon advice from the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, also known as his “Black Cabinet.” This group included a young Harvard economist, Dr. Robert Weaver, who subsequently became the nation’s first black cabinet secretary in 1966, as President Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Aubrey Williams, the director of the NYA, hired more black administrators than any other federal agency, and appointed them to oversee projects throughout the country. One key figure in the NYA was Mary McLeod Bethune ([\[link\]](#)), a prominent African American educator tapped by Roosevelt to act as the director of the NYA’s Division of Negro Affairs. Bethune had been a spokesperson and an

educator for years; with this role, she became one of the president's foremost African American advisors. During his presidency, Roosevelt became the first to appoint a black federal judge, as well as the first commander-in-chief to promote an African American to brigadier general. Most notably, he became the first president to publicly speak against lynching as a "vile form of collective murder."



This photo of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune (second from left) was taken at the opening of Midway Hall, a federal building to house female African American government workers. Bethune was sometimes criticized for working with those in power, but her willingness to build alliances contributed to success in raising money and support for her causes.

**Note:****Mary McLeod Bethune on Racial Justice**

"Democracy is for me, and for twelve million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith. For me, it is based on Christianity, in which we confidently entrust our destiny as a people. Under God's guidance in this great democracy, we are rising out of the darkness of slavery into the light of freedom. Here my race has been afforded [the] opportunity to advance from a people 80 percent illiterate to a people 80 percent literate; from abject poverty to the ownership and operation of a million farms and 750,000 homes; from total disfranchisement to participation in government; from the status of chattels to recognized contributors to the American culture."

When Mary McLeod Bethune spoke these words, she spoke on behalf of a race of American citizens for whom the Great Depression was much more than economic hardship. For African Americans, the Depression once again exposed the racism and inequality that gripped the nation economically, socially, and politically. Her work as a member of President Franklin Roosevelt's unofficial "Black Cabinet" as well as the Director of the Division of Negro Affairs for the NYA, presented her an opportunity to advance African American causes on all fronts—but especially in the area of black literacy. As part of the larger WPA, she also influenced employment programs in the arts and public work sectors, and routinely had the president's ear on matters related to racial justice.

**Note:**

Listen to this [audio clip](#) of Eleanor Roosevelt interviewing Mary McLeod Bethune. By listening to her talking to Bethune and offering up her support, it becomes clear how compelling the immensely popular first lady was when speaking about programs of close personal interest to her. How do you think this would have been received by Roosevelt's supporters?



However, despite these efforts, Roosevelt also understood the precariousness of his political position. In order to maintain a coalition of Democrats to support his larger relief and recovery efforts, Roosevelt could not afford to alienate Southern Democrats who might easily bolt should he openly advocate for civil rights. While he spoke about the importance of anti-lynching legislation, he never formally pushed Congress to propose such a law. He did publicly support the abolition of the poll tax, which Congress eventually accomplished in 1941. Likewise, although agency directors adopted changes to ensure job opportunities for African Americans at the federal level, at the local level, few advancements were made, and African Americans remained at the back of the employment lines. Despite such failures, however, Roosevelt deserves credit for acknowledging the importance of race relations and civil rights. At the federal level, more than any of his predecessors since the Civil War, Roosevelt remained aware of the role that the federal government can play in initiating important discussions about civil rights, as well as encouraging the development of a new cadre of civil rights leaders.

Although unable to bring about sweeping civil rights reforms for African Americans in the early stages of his administration, Roosevelt was able to work with Congress to significantly improve the lives of Indians. In 1934, he signed into law the Indian Reorganization Act (sometimes referred to as the “Indian New Deal”). This law formally abandoned the assimilationist policies set forth in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Rather than forcing Indians to adapt to American culture, the new program encouraged them to develop forms of local self-government, as well as to preserve their artifacts and heritage. John Collier, the Commissioner on Indian Bureau Affairs from 1933 to 1945, championed this legislation and saw it as an opportunity to correct past injustices that land allotment and assimilation had wrought upon Indians. Although the re-establishment of communal tribal lands would prove to be difficult, Collier used this law to convince federal officials to return nearly two million acres of government-held land to various tribes in order to move the process along. Although subsequent legislation later circumscribed the degree to which tribes were allowed to self-govern on reservations, Collier’s work is still viewed as a significant step in improving race relations with Indians and preserving their heritage.

## **Women and the New Deal**

For women, Roosevelt's policies and practices had a similarly mixed effect. Wage discrimination in federal jobs programs was rampant, and relief policies encouraged women to remain home and leave jobs open for men. This belief was well in line with the gender norms of the day. Several federal relief programs specifically forbade husbands and wives' both drawing jobs or relief from the same agency. The WPA became the first specific New Deal agency to openly hire women—specifically widows, single women, and the wives of disabled husbands. While they did not take part in construction projects, these women did undertake sewing projects to provide blankets and clothing to hospitals and relief agencies. Likewise, several women took part in the various Federal One art projects. Despite the obvious gender limitations, many women strongly supported Roosevelt's New Deal, as much for its direct relief handouts for women as for its employment opportunities for men. One such woman was Mary (Molly) Dewson. A longtime activist in the women's suffrage movement, Dewson worked for women's rights and ultimately rose to be the Director of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party. Dewson and Mary McLeod Bethune, the national champion of African American education and literacy who rose to the level of Director of the Division of Negro Affairs for the NYA, understood the limitations of the New Deal, but also the opportunities for advancement it presented during very trying times. Rather than lamenting what Roosevelt could not or would not do, they felt, and perhaps rightly so, that Roosevelt would do more than most to help women and African Americans achieve a piece of the new America he was building.

Among the few, but notable, women who directly impacted Roosevelt's policies was Frances Perkins, who as Secretary of Labor was the first female member of any presidential cabinet, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a strong and public advocate for social causes. Perkins, one of only two original Cabinet members to stay with Roosevelt for his entire presidency, was directly involved in the administration of the CCC, PWA, NRA, and the Social Security Act. Among several important measures, she took greatest pleasure in championing minimum wage statutes as well as the penultimate piece of New Deal legislation, the Fair Labor Standards Act. Roosevelt came to trust Perkins' advice with few

questions or concerns, and steadfastly supported her work through the end of his life (Figure 26\_03\_Perkins).



(a)



(b)

After leaving her post as head of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party, Molly Dewson (a) later accepted an appointment to the Social Security Board, working with fellow board members Arthur J. Altmeyer and George E. Bigge, shown here in 1937. Another influential advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt was Frances Perkins (b), who, as U.S. Secretary of Labor, graced the cover of *Time* magazine on August 14, 1933.

**Note:**

**Molly Dewson and Women Democrats**

In her effort to get President Roosevelt re-elected in 1936, Dewson commented, "We don't make the old-fashioned plea to the women that our nominee is charming, and all that. We appeal to the intelligence of the

country's women. Ours were economic issues and we found the women ready to listen."

As head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 1932, Molly Dewson proved to be an influential supporter of President Franklin Roosevelt and one of his key advisors regarding issues pertaining to women's rights. Agreeing with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt that "Women must learn to play the games as men do," Dewson worked diligently in her position with the DNC to ensure that women could serve as delegates and alternates to the national conventions. Her approach, and her realization that women were intelligent enough to make rational choices, greatly appealed to Roosevelt. Her methods were perhaps not too different from his own, as he spoke to the public through his fireside chats. Dewson's impressive organizational skills on behalf of the party earned her the nickname "the little general" from President Roosevelt.

However, Eleanor Roosevelt, more so than any other individual, came to represent the strongest influence upon the president; and she used her unique position to champion several causes for women, African Americans, and the rural poor ([\[link\]](#)). She married Franklin Roosevelt, who was her fifth cousin, in 1905 and subsequently had six children, one of whom died at only seven months old. A strong supporter of her husband's political ambitions, Eleanor campaigned by his side through the failed vice-presidential bid in 1920 and on his behalf after he was diagnosed with polio in 1921. When she discovered letters of her husband's affair with her social secretary, Lucy Mercer, the marriage became less one of romance and more one of a political partnership that would continue—strained at times—until the president's death in 1945.



Eleanor Roosevelt travelled the country to promote New Deal programs. Here she visits a WPA nursery school in Des Moines, Iowa, on June 8, 1936. (credit: FDR Presidential Library & Museum)

Historians agree that the first lady used her presence in the White House, in addition to the leverage of her failed marriage and knowledge of her husband's infidelities, to her advantage. She promoted several causes that the president himself would have had difficulty championing at the time. From newspaper and magazine articles she authored, to a busy travel schedule that saw her regularly cross the country, the first lady sought to remind Americans that their plight was foremost on the minds of all working in the White House. Eleanor was so active in her public appearances that, by 1940, she began holding regular press conferences to answer reporters' questions. Among her first substantial projects was the

creation of Arthurdale—a resettlement community for displaced coal miners in West Virginia. Although the planned community became less of an administration priority as the years progressed (eventually folding in 1940), for seven years, Eleanor remained committed to its success as a model of assistance for the rural poor.

Exposed to issues of racial segregation in the Arthurdale experiment, Eleanor subsequently supported many civil rights causes through the remainder of the Roosevelt presidency. When it further became clear that racial discrimination was rampant in the administration of virtually all New Deal job programs—especially in the southern states—she continued to pressure her husband for remedies. In 1934, she openly lobbied for passage of the federal anti-lynching bill that the president privately supported but could not politically endorse. Despite the subsequent failure of the Senate to pass such legislation, Eleanor succeeded in arranging a meeting between her husband and then-NAACP president Walter White to discuss anti-lynching and other pertinent calls for civil rights legislation.

White was only one of Eleanor’s African American guests to the White House. Breaking with precedent, and much to the disdain of many White House officials, the first lady routinely invited prominent African Americans to dine with her and the president. Most notably, when the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused to permit internationally renowned black opera contralto Marian Anderson to sing in Constitution Hall, Eleanor resigned her membership in the DAR and arranged for Anderson to sing at a public concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, followed by her appearance at a state dinner at the White House in honor of the king and queen of England. With regard to race relations in particular, Eleanor Roosevelt was able to accomplish what her husband—for delicate political reasons—could not: become the administration’s face for civil rights.

## **Section Summary**

Despite his popularity, Roosevelt had significant critics at the end of the First New Deal. Some on the right felt that he had moved the country in a dangerous direction towards socialism and fascism, whereas others on the

left felt that he had not gone far enough to help the still-struggling American people. Reeling after the Supreme Court struck down two key pieces of New Deal legislation, the AAA and NIRA, Roosevelt pushed Congress to pass a new wave of bills to provide jobs, banking reforms, and a social safety net. The laws that emerged—the Banking Act, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, and the Social Security Act—still define our country today.

Roosevelt won his second term in a landslide and continued to push for legislation that would help the economy. The jobs programs employed over eight million people and, while systematic discrimination hurt both women and African American workers, these programs were still successful in getting people back to work. The last major piece of New Deal legislation that Roosevelt passed was the Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a minimum wage, established a maximum-hour workweek, and forbade child labor. This law, as well as Social Security, still provides much of the social safety net in the United States today.

While critics and historians continue to debate whether the New Deal ushered in a permanent change to the political culture of the country, from one of individualism to the creation of a welfare state, none deny the fact that Roosevelt's presidency expanded the role of the federal government in all people's lives, generally for the better. Even if the most conservative of presidential successors would question this commitment, the notion of some level of government involvement in economic regulation and social welfare had largely been settled by 1941. Future debates would be about the extent and degree of that involvement.

## **Review Questions**

### **Exercise:**

#### **Problem:**

Which of the following statements accurately describes Mary McLeod Bethune?

A. She was a prominent supporter of the Townsend Plan.

- B. She was a key figure in the NYA.
- C. She was Eleanor Roosevelt's personal secretary.
- D. She was a labor organizer.

---

**Solution:**

B

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

The Social Security Act borrowed some ideas from which of the following?

- A. the Townsend Plan
- B. the Division of Negro Affairs
- C. the Education Trust
- D. the NIRA

---

**Solution:**

A

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** What was the first New Deal agency to hire women openly?

- A. the NRA
- B. the WPA
- C. the AAA
- D. the TVA

---

**Solution:**

B



**Exercise:****Problem:**

What were the major goals and accomplishments of the Indian New Deal?

---

**Solution:**

The Indian Reorganization Act, or Indian New Deal, of 1934 put an end to the policies set forth in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. Rather than encouraging assimilation, the new act promoted Indians' development of local self-government and the preservation of Indian artifacts and heritage. John Collier, the Commissioner on Indian Bureau Affairs, was able to use the law to push for federal officials' return of nearly two million acres of government-held land to various tribes.

**Critical Thinking Questions****Exercise:****Problem:**

To what extent was Franklin Roosevelt's overwhelming victory in the 1932 presidential election a reflection of his own ideas for change? To what extent did it represent public discontent with Herbert Hoover's lack of answers?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

Whom did the New Deal help the least? What hardships did these individuals continue to suffer? Why were Roosevelt's programs unsuccessful in the alleviation of their adversities?

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

Was Franklin Roosevelt successful at combatting the Great Depression? How did the New Deal affect future generations of Americans?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What were the key differences between the First New Deal and the Second New Deal? On the whole, what did each New Deal set out to accomplish?

**Exercise:****Problem:**

What challenges did Roosevelt face in his work on behalf of African Americans? What impact did the New Deal have ultimately on race relations?

**Glossary****Social Security**

a series of programs designed to help the population's most vulnerable—the unemployed, those over age sixty-five, unwed mothers, and the disabled—through various pension, insurance, and aid programs

**Supreme Court Packing Plan**

Roosevelt's plan, after being reelected, to pack the Supreme Court with an additional six justices, one for every justice over seventy who refused to step down

**Works Progress Administration**

a program run by Harry Hopkins that provided jobs for over eight million Americans from its inception to its closure in 1943

## Chapter 26: The African American Struggle for Civil Rights

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how Presidents Truman and Eisenhower addressed civil rights issues
- Discuss efforts by African Americans to end discrimination and segregation
- Describe southern whites' response to the civil rights movement

In the aftermath of World War II, African Americans began to mount organized resistance to racially discriminatory policies in force throughout much of the United States. In the South, they used a combination of legal challenges and grassroots activism to begin dismantling the racial segregation that had stood for nearly a century following the end of Reconstruction. Community activists and civil rights leaders targeted racially discriminatory housing practices, segregated transportation, and legal requirements that African Americans and whites be educated separately. While many of these challenges were successful, life did not necessarily improve for African Americans. Hostile whites fought these changes in any way they could, including by resorting to violence.

### EARLY VICTORIES

During World War II, many African Americans had supported the “Double V Campaign,” which called on them to defeat foreign enemies while simultaneously fighting against segregation and discrimination at home. After World War II ended, many returned home to discover that, despite their sacrifices, the United States was not willing to extend them any greater rights than they had enjoyed before the war. Particularly rankling was the fact that although African American veterans were legally entitled to draw benefits under the GI Bill, discriminatory practices prevented them from doing so. For example, many banks would not give them mortgages if they wished to buy homes in predominantly African American neighborhoods, which banks often considered too risky an investment. However, African Americans who attempted to purchase homes in white neighborhoods often found themselves unable to do so because of real estate covenants that prevented owners from selling their property to blacks. Indeed, when a

black family purchased a Levittown house in 1957, they were subjected to harassment and threats of violence.

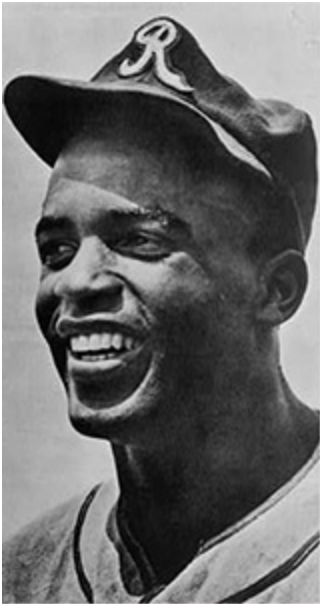
**Note:**

For a look at the [experiences of an African American family](#) that tried to move to a white suburban community, view the 1957 documentary *Crisis in Levittown*.

The postwar era, however, saw African Americans make greater use of the courts to defend their rights. In 1944, an African American woman, Irene Morgan, was arrested in Virginia for refusing to give up her seat on an interstate bus and sued to have her conviction overturned. In *Morgan v. the Commonwealth of Virginia* in 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the conviction should be overturned because it violated the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution. This victory emboldened some civil rights activists to launch the Journey of Reconciliation, a bus trip taken by eight African American men and eight white men through the states of the Upper South to test the South's enforcement of the *Morgan* decision.

Other victories followed. In 1948, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that courts could not enforce real estate covenants that restricted the purchase or sale of property based on race. In 1950, the NAACP brought a case before the U.S. Supreme Court that they hoped would help to undermine the concept of "separate but equal" as espoused in the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which gave legal sanction to segregated school systems. *Sweatt v. Painter* was a case brought by Herman Marion Sweatt, who sued the University of Texas for denying him admission to its law school because state law prohibited integrated education. Texas attempted to form a separate law school for African Americans only, but in its decision on the case, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected this solution, holding that the separate school provided neither equal facilities nor "intangibles," such as the ability to form relationships with other future lawyers, that a professional school should provide.

Not all efforts to enact desegregation required the use of the courts, however. On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson started for the Brooklyn Dodgers, playing first base. He was the first African American to play baseball in the National League, breaking the color barrier. Although African Americans had their own baseball teams in the Negro Leagues, Robinson opened the gates for them to play in direct competition with white players in the major leagues. Other African American athletes also began to challenge the segregation of American sports. At the 1948 Summer Olympics, Alice Coachman, an African American, was the only American woman to take a gold medal in the games ([link](#)). These changes, while symbolically significant, were mere cracks in the wall of segregation.



(a)



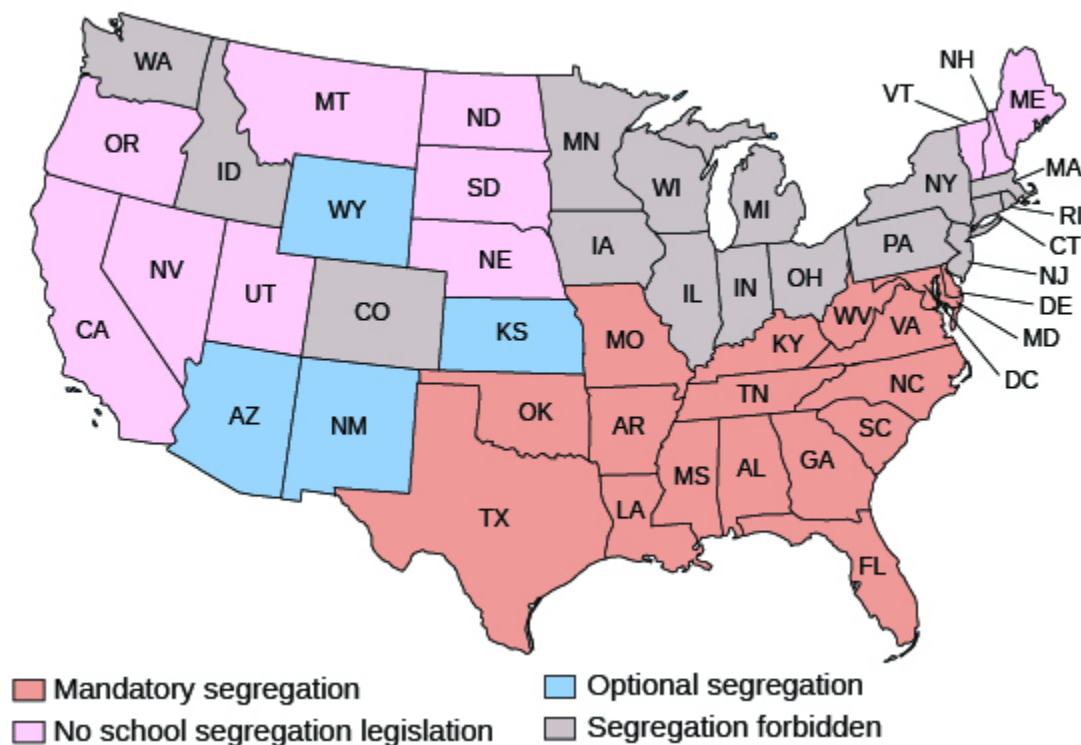
(b)

Baseball legend Jackie Robinson (a) was active in the civil rights movement. He served on the NAACP's board of directors and helped to found an African American-owned bank. Alice Coachman (b), who competed in track and field at Tuskegee University, was the first black woman to win an Olympic gold medal.

## DESEGREGATION AND INTEGRATION

Until 1954, racial segregation in education was not only legal but was required in seventeen states and permissible in several others ([\[link\]](#)). Utilizing evidence provided in sociological studies conducted by Kenneth Clark and Gunnar Myrdal, however, Thurgood Marshall, then chief counsel for the NAACP, successfully argued the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* before the U.S. Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Earl Warren. Marshall showed that the practice of segregation in public schools made African American students feel inferior. Even if the facilities provided were equal in nature, the Court noted in its decision, the very fact that some students were separated from others on the basis of their race made segregation unconstitutional.

### U.S. School Segregation prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*



This map shows those states in which racial segregation in public

education was required by law before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In 1960, four years later, fewer than 10 percent of southern African American students attended the same schools as white students.

**Note:**

**Thurgood Marshall on Fighting Racism**

As a law student in 1933, Thurgood Marshall ([\[link\]](#)) was recruited by his mentor Charles Hamilton Houston to assist in gathering information for the defense of a black man in Virginia accused of killing two white women. His continued close association with Houston led Marshall to aggressively defend blacks in the court system and to use the courts as the weapon by which equal rights might be extracted from the U.S. Constitution and a white racist system. Houston also suggested that it would be important to establish legal precedents regarding the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of separate but equal.



In 1956, NAACP leaders (from left to right) Henry L. Moon, Roy Wilkins,

Herbert Hill, and Thurgood Marshall present a new poster in the campaign against southern white racism. Marshall successfully argued the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) before the U.S. Supreme Court and later became the court's first African American justice.

By 1938, Marshall had become “Mr. Civil Rights” and formally organized the NAACP’s Legal Defense and Education Fund in 1940 to garner the resources to take on cases to break the racist justice system of America. A direct result of Marshall’s energies and commitment was his 1940 victory in a Supreme Court case, *Chambers v. Florida*, which held that confessions obtained by violence and torture were inadmissible in a court of law. His most well-known case was *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which held that state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students were unconstitutional.

Later in life, Marshall reflected on his career fighting racism in a speech at Howard Law School in 1978:

"Be aware of that myth, that everything is going to be all right. Don't give in. I add that, because it seems to me, that what we need to do today is to refocus. Back in the 30s and 40s, we could go no place but to court. We knew then, the court was not the final solution. Many of us knew the final solution would have to be politics, if for no other reason, politics is cheaper than lawsuits. So now we have both. We have our legal arm, and we have our political arm. Let's use them both. And don't listen to this myth that it can be solved by either or that it has already been solved. Take it from me, it has not been solved."

When Marshall says that the problems of racism have not been solved, to what was he referring?

*Plessy v. Ferguson* had been overturned. The challenge now was to integrate schools. A year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered southern school systems to begin **desegregation** “with all deliberate speed.” Some



school districts voluntarily integrated their schools. For many other districts, however, “deliberate speed” was very, very slow.

It soon became clear that enforcing *Brown v. the Board of Education* would require presidential intervention. Eisenhower did not agree with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision and did not wish to force southern states to integrate their schools. However, as president, he was responsible for doing so. In 1957, Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, was forced to accept its first nine African American students, who became known as the **Little Rock Nine**. In response, Arkansas governor Orval Faubus called out the state National Guard to prevent the students from attending classes, removing the troops only after Eisenhower told him to do so. A subsequent attempt by the nine students to attend school resulted in mob violence. Eisenhower then placed the Arkansas National Guard under federal control and sent the U.S. Army’s 101st airborne unit to escort the students to and from school as well as from class to class ([link](#)). This was the first time since the end of Reconstruction that federal troops once more protected the rights of African Americans in the South.



In 1957, U.S. soldiers from the 101st Airborne were called in to escort the Little Rock Nine into and around formerly all-

white Central High School in Little Rock,  
Arkansas.

Throughout the course of the school year, the Little Rock Nine were insulted, harassed, and physically assaulted; nevertheless, they returned to school each day. At the end of the school year, the first African American student graduated from Central High. At the beginning of the 1958–1959 school year, Orval Faubus ordered all Little Rock’s public schools closed. In the opinion of white segregationists, keeping all students out of school was preferable to having them attend integrated schools. In 1959, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the school had to be reopened and that the process of desegregation had to proceed.

## **WHITE RESPONSES**

Efforts to desegregate public schools led to a backlash among most southern whites. Many greeted the *Brown* decision with horror; some World War II veterans questioned how the government they had fought for could betray them in such a fashion. Some white parents promptly withdrew their children from public schools and enrolled them in all-white private academies, many newly created for the sole purpose of keeping white children from attending integrated schools. Often, these “academies” held classes in neighbors’ basements or living rooms.

Other white southerners turned to state legislatures or courts to solve the problem of school integration. Orders to integrate school districts were routinely challenged in court. When the lawsuits proved unsuccessful, many southern school districts responded by closing all public schools, as Orval Faubus had done after Central High School was integrated. One county in Virginia closed its public schools for five years rather than see them integrated. Besides suing school districts, many southern segregationists filed lawsuits against the NAACP, trying to bankrupt the organization. Many national politicians supported the segregationist efforts. In 1956, ninety-six members of Congress signed “The Southern Manifesto,” in which they accused the U.S. Supreme Court of misusing its power and

violating the principle of **states' rights**, which maintained that states had rights equal to those of the federal government.

Unfortunately, many white southern racists, frightened by challenges to the social order, responded with violence. When Little Rock's Central High School desegregated, an irate Ku Klux Klansman from a neighboring community sent a letter to the members of the city's school board in which he denounced them as Communists and threatened to kill them. White rage sometimes erupted into murder. In August 1955, both white and black Americans were shocked by the brutality of the murder of Emmett Till. Till, a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago, had been vacationing with relatives in Mississippi. While visiting a white-owned store, he had made a remark to the white woman behind the counter. A few days later, the husband and brother-in-law of the woman came to the home of Till's relatives in the middle of the night and abducted the boy. Till's beaten and mutilated body was found in a nearby river three days later. Till's mother insisted on an open-casket funeral; she wished to use her son's body to reveal the brutality of southern racism. The murder of a child who had been guilty of no more than a casual remark captured the nation's attention, as did the acquittal of the two men who admitted killing him.

## **THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT**

One of those inspired by Till's death was Rosa Parks, an NAACP member from Montgomery, Alabama, who became the face of the 1955–1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott. City ordinances in Montgomery segregated the city's buses, forcing African American passengers to ride in the back section. They had to enter through the rear of the bus, could not share seats with white passengers, and, if the front of the bus was full and a white passenger requested an African American's seat, had to relinquish their place to the white rider. The bus company also refused to hire African American drivers even though most of the people who rode the buses were black.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man, and the Montgomery police arrested her. After being bailed out of jail, she decided to fight the laws requiring segregation in court. To support her, the

Women's Political Council, a group of African American female activists, organized a boycott of Montgomery's buses. News of the boycott spread through newspaper notices and by word of mouth; ministers rallied their congregations to support the Women's Political Council. Their efforts were successful, and forty thousand African American riders did not take the bus on December 5, the first day of the boycott.

Other African American leaders within the city embraced the boycott and maintained it beyond December 5, Rosa Parks' court date. Among them was a young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. For the next year, black Montgomery residents avoided the city's buses. Some organized carpools. Others paid for rides in African American-owned taxis, whose drivers reduced their fees. Most walked to and from school, work, and church for 381 days, the duration of the boycott. In June 1956, an Alabama federal court found the segregation ordinance unconstitutional. The city appealed, but the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision. The city's buses were desegregated.

## Section Summary

After World War II, African American efforts to secure greater civil rights increased across the United States. African American lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall championed cases intended to destroy the Jim Crow system of segregation that had dominated the American South since Reconstruction. The landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* prohibited segregation in public schools, but not all school districts integrated willingly, and President Eisenhower had to use the military to desegregate Little Rock's Central High School. The courts and the federal government did not assist African Americans in asserting their rights in other cases. In Montgomery, Alabama, it was the grassroots efforts of African American citizens who boycotted the city's bus system that brought about change. Throughout the region, many white southerners made their opposition to these efforts known. Too often, this opposition manifested itself in violence and tragedy, as in the murder of Emmett Till.

## Review Questions

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

The NAACP lawyer who became known as “Mr. Civil Rights” was \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Earl Warren
- B. Jackie Robinson
- C. Orval Faubus
- D. Thurgood Marshall

---

**Solution:**

D

**Exercise:**

**Problem:**

The Arkansas governor who tried to prevent the integration of Little Rock High School was \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Charles Hamilton Houston
- B. Kenneth Clark
- C. Orval Faubus
- D. Clark Clifford

---

**Solution:**

C

**Exercise:**

**Problem:** What was the significance of *Shelley v. Kraemer*?

---

**Solution:**

*Shelley v. Kraemer* held that state courts could not enforce agreements that prevented homeowners from selling to members of particular races. The ruling made it easier for African Americans to purchase houses in neighborhoods of their choosing.

## Critical Thinking Questions

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

How did some Americans turn their wartime experiences into lasting personal gains (i.e. better employment, a new home, or an education) after the war was over? Why did others miss out on these opportunities?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What was the reason for the breakdown in friendly relations between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II? What were the results of this conflict?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

How did fear of the Soviet Union and Communism affect American culture and society?

### Exercise:

#### Problem:

What social changes took place in the United States after World War II? What role did the war play in those changes?

### Exercise:

**Problem:**

How did the wartime experiences of African Americans contribute to the drive for greater civil rights after the war?

**Glossary**

desegregation

the removal of laws and policies requiring the separation of different racial or ethnic groups

Little Rock Nine

the nickname for the nine African American high school students who first integrated Little Rock's Central High School

states' rights

the political belief that states possess authority beyond federal law, which is usually seen as the supreme law of the land, and thus can act in opposition to federal law